

Subterranean Homesick Alien

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Subterranean Homesick Alien

by [teeth_eater](#)

Summary

Underground markets have become the scorn of Tommy's existence, full of contraband, of which he is included in, the cages lining the walls make his stomach twist. Still, he's here now, and there's no reason to panic with his crew right here by his side.

Right?

Notes

hello and welcome! im very excited for this one

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Tommy honestly can't believe he's still alive.

Not because of the whole 'getting an organ removed by an alien' thing, he's pretty much used to that, he's more surprised that Phil hasn't killed him for the sheer number of times he's gotten out of bed to go wander around. No matter how many times the captain tells him to stay down and let his body heal, Tommy can't *help* it. His legs hurt from staying still so long, he needs to walk around or he might die for real this time, removed appendix be damned.

Unfortunately for him, his secret jaunt to the kitchen was interrupted by the three adults of the ship walking in, catching him with his hand in the metaphorical cookie jar. Or at least, they would have caught him, had Tommy not reverted back to his raccoon-boy ways and ducked into the uncovered vent. The cramped position tugged at his stitches a bit, but it wasn't too painful, so he didn't bother giving his position away.

"-not going to get better if we don't," Wilbur is whispering as he walks into the room. Tommy freezes, smile falling. His plan to jump out of the vent and scare them is dashed in order to listen in on their conversation. He has a feeling they're talking about him, he has a right to listen.

"Getting something like that would paint a huge target on our backs," Techno says. "That would be like putting a huge billboard on the ship that says *'hey, human onboard! Come arrest us!'*"

"Not if we get it from the right people, there are sellers who don't care what you buy." Wilbur argues.

"Those people would just as soon kidnap Tommy," Phil says, sounding uncharacteristically serious.

"If we don't get an antibiotic that is actually strong enough to handle Tommy's infection he's only going to get sicker." Wilbur hisses. "The longer we keep him on the mild shit the more dangerous it's going to get."

There is silence for a few seconds, tension thick in the room, harsh enough to make Tommy's breath stutter in his chest.

"Is he going to die if we don't?" Phil asks, voice quiet and calm.

"He could," Wilbur says. Tommy hears him sit down heavily in one of the soft kitchen chairs. "Even if he doesn't, he could just... be weakened. For the rest of his life. If he gets sick again, even benign shit could kill him."

"Then we're changing course to the closest underground market," Phil says. A door opens, then there are the distinct clicking footsteps of Phil's talons. "Get ready."

The door closes and the room is left in heavy silence.

"I don't like this," Techno growls.

"We have no choice," Wilbur says. "Even if- listen, I know you don't like it, but it's for Tommy, okay?"

There is another tense quiet, and Tommy gets the irrational thought that they can hear his heartbeat, even though they never did when he was hiding in the vents all those months ago.

"I know," Techno says finally. "I'm not saying I'm not on board or anything, I'll do anything for that dumb kid. I just worry about taking a human anywhere near one of those markets."

"I know," Wilbur sighs. "Fuck man, we just have to do it. It's not like we're actually going to take him *into* the market, and he can scare off pretty much anyone that would try to attack the ship."

"Right," Techno says, sounding unconvinced. "Well, I'm going to go... polish. My... weapons."

"Smooth exit," Wilbur calls after Techno. The kitchen is silent for a few seconds before Wilbur speaks again, making Tommy jump in surprise.

"I know you're in the vents, Toms," Wilbur says, softly kicking the metal cover. Tommy climbs out sheepishly, getting to his feet. "Phil's gonna be pissed you're out of bed," Wilbur says conversationally.

"What were you guys talking about?" Tommy says, ignoring the prospect of his future lecture from their captain.

"You were listening," Wilbur points out dryly.

"Yeah, but I wasn't really clued in."

"Well," Wilbur says, sitting down again and gesturing for Tommy to sit beside him. "We need a special kind of antibiotic for you, but you can only find it on Earth, so it's hard to get. They only have it at underground markets, so that's where we're going."

"Why can't I go?" Tommy says, frowning. "Techno seemed all bent out of shape about it."

"They're less than... *moral* there," Wilbur says, not meeting Tommy's eye. "If- I mean. When you were taken they probably were heading towards one of those markets."

There are a few beats of silence before Tommy can speak around the sudden lump in his throat.

"Oh." He says, sounding childish to even his own ears.

"Yeah," Wilbur says, clearing his throat. "So it's not ideal."

"And we have to go?"

"If we want to keep you healthy, yeah."

"Hey, Wil?"

"Yeah?"

"How are you going to know what to buy if none of you can read English?"

Tommy adjusts the goggles of his disguise for what feels like the millionth time, making Techno nudge his hand away from his face.

"Stop messing with it," Techno mutters gruffly, head swiveling slightly to glare at a passerby that came a little too close. "You can't show your face."

"It's uncomfortable," Tommy whines, pulling at the tight neck of his hood.

"Phil's not complaining," Wilbur points out.

"He doesn't even *have* to wear a disguise." Tommy gripes.

"Oh trust me," Phil says with a chuckle, sliding closer to the group. "I definitely do."

Techno tugs Tubbo closer, growling something about a leash, and Ranboo follows, looking more nervous than Tommy has ever seen him, and that is saying something.

"I don't know why we couldn't stay on the ship," Ranboo says, gesturing to Tubbo, who is practically vibrating with excitement at the stalls of contraband.

"Tubbo would have snuck out, and I'm not leaving you alone to get it in your head that we got killed and have a meltdown," Phil says, eyeing a stall full of some strangely shaped machines.

"You know me so well," Ranboo mutters, dragging Tubbo back to his side.

"Guys, we're here for a reason, come on." Tommy says. He'd rather not stay here any longer than he absolutely has to, all the caged animals are making him feel nauseous.

"Sure, if you can figure out where the right stall is go right ahead," Wilbur teases. Tommy doesn't respond, staring out over the market with undivided focus. The phantling's smile fades, sensing the fact that Tommy isn't in the mood to joke.

"I know the area," Phil says, guiding the group to weave through the dense crowds.

"I'll pretend that's not troubling," Ranboo says mildly, stepping out of the way of a glowering alien.

"Probably for the best," Wilbur agrees.

Because Tommy has perhaps the worst luck in the galaxy, they had landed their ship on the other side of the market from where they need to be, so it takes much longer than he'd like for them to get anywhere near it. Especially with his crew getting distracted by every other stall and strange character they pass. Tommy's irritation is close to boiling over, but he manages to not snap at his team. It's not their fault. He's not really angry at them, just upset by the situation. All those other things online therapists say to remind yourself of when you're upset.

They pass a stall of exotic fruits, and Tommy pockets a chorus fruit to give to Ranboo. The stallkeeper doesn't see him, thankfully, and he walks off. He jogs slightly to catch up with the group and drops the purple fruit in Ranboo's hand. The enderian blinks at him, surprised, before ducking his head gratefully.

"You stole this didn't you?" He whispers, bending down slightly.

"I would never do something like that," Tommy replies, mock offended. "I have half a mind to kick you off the-"

Tommy hears screaming. He stops, turning his head towards the sound. It sounds like fighting.

"What's happening?" Tommy asks, walking to Phil and grabbing onto his captain's cloak for any sense of security. He hates the sound of fighting.

"I think there's a fighting ring set up here," Phil says, only half paying attention. "For people to bet on. We're almost there, come on."

Tommy follows the crew, trying to ignore the sounds of flesh hitting flesh in some distant corner of the market. Eventually, Tubbo manages to distract him by pulling him off to see some terrifying weapon that neither of them even know how to use, and then his attention is drawn back to the task at hand when Phil finds the right stall and gets into conversation with the shady looking stall keeper, an elytrian like Phil.

"Hey, I don't ask questions man, just pay for it and we're fine." The man is saying, wiping greasy hands on his apron. Tommy leans over his captain's shoulder and looks for the right bottle. He remembers the name, he had taken it after getting strep when he was a kid, and he had hated the taste so much that he had committed it to memory so he'd know to never take it again. Funny how these things work out.

He nudges Wilbur and points towards the bottle.

"Penicillin," He mutters. "It's made out of a type of mold you know."

"Great," Wilbur says, apparently ignoring his fun fact. Dick.

Tommy wanders off while his captain buys the medicine, joining Ranboo and Tubbo at another stall. It's harder to ignore the fighting now. He can hear cheering too, when the sounds of skin hitting skin gets more intense. It makes him feel sick to his stomach.

"Sometimes, on the last ship, if people got too riled up, the aliens would make them fight to weaken them," Tommy says conversationally. Tubbo looks up, concern in his eyes.

"What?"

"Yeah. I mean- *I* never did, because- well, other people would take my place and I was too scrawny to fight anyway. But, you know." Tommy shrugs, poking through a stack of space-magazines. "It doesn't matter."

"It matters," Ranboo says quietly. "That matters a lot."

"I mean- It happened. It's over." Tommy says, still flicking through the magazines. He can't read any of them.

"It's still affecting you though," Tubbo says. Tommy shrugs again.

"I want to go home," Tommy says quietly. He pauses when he registers what he'd said. He wonders when the ship started to be home to him.

"I'll get the others, I don't like it here," Ranboo says, taking a few steps away.

"Damn it!" Someone shouts in the distance. Tommy doesn't register what he's heard at first, still thumbing through the sheets of wrinkled paper. He goes stock still when he realizes.

Someone is speaking *English*.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

it is my birthday! and yes it was a quick update. i said i was excited.

The milk crate of magazines crashes to the ground, spilling brightly colored tabloids across the ground. The shopkeeper shouts something angry, but Tommy doesn't hear the meaning, blood rushing in his ears. Another pained gasp, another punch. He can hear where the pit is.

He runs. Faster than he has run in a long, long time. He hears one of his crew let out a surprised shout from behind him, but he doesn't stop. English, a *human being*. Conversation in his own language. The idea is tantalizing enough that he doesn't notice or care how much danger he is putting himself in by breaking off from the group.

He runs, elbowing through the crowd and ignoring the offended noises that trail after him. Eventually, the crowd thins a bit and Tommy is able to run even faster. His lungs are burning, still, he runs.

He slows when he ends up in another line of stalls, practically identical to the last hundreds, ending at a walk at the suspicious stares of the vendors. He puts his hands in his pockets, sucking in a sharp breath when the severity of what he's done hits him. He's separated from his group and surrounded by people who would pay good money to kill him. Or more likely, take him and slowly siphon away anything they deemed valuable until there was nothing left but a shell. He can still hear the cheering, the shouts of pain, and he itches to rush forward, but he can't. Not with the dull stares of the shopkeepers following his movements.

So he walks, keeping his posture relaxed and easy, not that any of them will know human body language well enough to tell. At least he hopes they don't. Someone is smoking somewhere, something sweet-smelling. It makes Tommy's stomach churn. He weaves through a small group, keeping his eyes wide, looking for his crew. Or whoever had spoken earlier. He sees neither. He keeps walking, keeps weaving, keeps his shoulders down and his chin high.

He reaches the end of the row of stalls. Beyond it, there is a crowd tucked underneath a stone outcropping, all cheering and booing in equal measures. Tommy steps forward. This must be

the fighting ring.

Tommy's mouth is dry and his hands are sweating, but he steps forward. The person who spoke English could be here, alien or human he doesn't care. If they care enough about humans to learn maybe- maybe.

Tommy shoulders through the packed crowd, earning a few glares and grumbles, which he ignores dutifully. He's close enough to see the ring now, see who's in it. In the ring, lined with ropes that are so similar to WWC that it would make Tommy laugh at any other time, there is a beast. It stands taller than anyone Tommy has ever seen, taller than Ranboo even, and he is a tall motherfucker. Its short black fur is raised in aggravation, and for a moment Tommy thinks the beast is like him. Trapped and forced to fight.

Then, the beast turns, and Tommy sees red blood on its teeth. The crowd is in an uproar, pushing up against each other like they're trying to become one body. Tommy is in the middle, staring at the beast. It's human blood, Tommy knows. He can smell iron.

Tommy pushes forward again, making sure his goggles are firmly covering his eyes when he sees the beast's eyes follow him. There is a body in the pit, slumped against the ropes, limbs shaking. They push themselves to their feet and turn towards the beast, who is seemingly too distracted by the cheering crowd to pay them much mind. Tommy breathes in, the air is humid and sticky from all the breath mingling. It stinks.

The smaller fighter, only a little shorter than Tommy, braces their arms out and lunges towards the beast, clinging to its neck in a chokehold. Tommy lets out a startled cheer, one that stutters in his throat when the beast throws them down to the ground, knocking the wind out of them. Tommy twists his fingers into the fabric of his jacket and hopes they get up.

They do, rolling onto their side before the beast can attack them while they're laying down. They put some weight on their arm before nearly toppling over again.

"Ow," They mutter to themselves, and Tommy freezes completely.

Oh. That's the voice.

It makes sense really, he thinks to himself. His nose tickles. That means he's probably going to start crying soon. It does make sense. Honestly, he was kind of stupid to think that a human would be free in space. Tommy is the exception, not the rule. He needs to remember that.

Someone grabs his hand, making him jump backwards, slamming into one of the other people in the crowd. They grumble something angry but whoever grabbed him flashes their teeth and they back off.

"You *cannot* run off like that," Techno says, sounding more furious than Tommy has ever heard him. "I don't even want to *think* about what could have happened to-"

"Techno," Phil says quietly, and the piglin quiets, following Phil's gaze to the ring. Tommy is watching the fight, his crew behind him again. The human- and Tommy is a little annoyed with himself for not realizing sooner, is still clinging to the beast's back, a hand wrapped around one of the creature's long horns. The human is wearing a plated metal mask, but Tommy is willing to bet they are gritting their teeth hard enough to crack them.

"Tommy..." Ranboo says quietly, putting a hand on his shoulder. Tommy shrugs him off. The crew watches in silence, and Tommy knows he should go. It's not safe for him here, for any of them, but he can't leave without seeing the end of the fight. Without seeing if the human in the pit shares the fate of everyone taken up here with Tommy.

Phil is whispering, trying to convince Tommy to leave with them. The human in the ring is thrown to the ground again. They cry out in pain. Tommy knows his cries sounds the same. They could have been neighbors.

Someone is tugging at his sleeve, pleading.

Tommy could have met them, in passing. Walked by them on the street and not thought anything of it. Tubbo has his fingers laced with Tommy's.

The human's chest gets stomped on and they shriek in breathless pain. The crowd cheers and Tubbo's hand squeezes.

It could have been Tommy, in that ring. If things had only been a little different. Shifted slightly to the left and it could be Tommy in danger of getting his chest caved in for a crowd of screaming betters.

The beast picks the human up by the front of their shirt. It looks like a tracksuit, old and battered and well-loved. He hopes the beast doesn't tear it, it's hard to find clothes that fit humans in space. The beast throws the human across the ring and they slam their head into one of the posts, letting out a shattering gasp. The beast steps forward quickly with a matching gasp, but the human is up again.

The strap on the back of their mask has been frayed. The metal sheet hiding their identity clatters to the floor.

Tommy's scream mixes with the terrible roar of the crowd.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

cw.
violence
kidnapping talk

The floor is cold underneath Tommy, like it always is. He hadn't been wearing warm clothes when he was taken, just at the tail end of spring, and he regrets it now, shivering in a baseball shirt and khakis. Sam and him are the last ones left, and Tommy is looking forward to this being over with.

Sam has been gone for half an hour. It isn't concerning, there are some experiments that take days and send people back with a haunted look in their eyes. Tommy picks at his fingernails idly. They're bleeding. His skin has been cracking more and more recently, Sam says it's a lack of nutrients, Tommy says it's stress.

The ship is silent, save for the ambient hum of space and the buzz of engines. There used to be the sounds of breathing, soft singing, weeping. It's quiet now. Tommy will try to get Sam to sing for him when he comes back, to fill the silence and mask space's roar. Tommy turns his hand over, examining how his fingers are turning blue. They must have forgotten to turn the heat on today.

There is noise outside of the door, something beyond the humming and the buzzing, shouted words in a language Tommy will never understand. He ignores it. Sometimes the aliens yell at each other. There is more yelling, Sam this time, which catches Tommy's attention. His shouts are wordless, sounding like he's trying to scare someone off. Tommy shuffles closer to the bars, straining his ears to listen. Sam is yelling still, and Tommy can hear a scuffle. Alien chattering, something he's grown used to, and then a shot goes off.

The yelling stops. All of it. When the voices start up again, Sam's does not join the chorus.

He doesn't come back.

Tommy waits.

And waits.

And waits.

He doesn't sleep. The aliens don't bring him food, so he doesn't eat. He just waits and he prays, even though he's never been a religious guy.

Sam doesn't come back. The yelling never starts up again.

Tommy is done waiting.

Hands snag on the back of his jacket, but none of his crew is able to do more than tug his cloak away, revealing his identity as a human. The crowd goes silent for a bare few seconds, and then starts roaring again. Tommy doesn't care. They can know he's human. It doesn't matter.

His crew does not seem to share the same sentiment, looking horrified as Tommy hops the ropes and lunges for the beast attacking Sam. Techno moves to join him in the pit, but is grabbed by Phil, who whispers something into the piglin's ear, terrified eyes never leaving Tommy's. Techno snarls, but stops trying to escape.

It doesn't matter. All that matters is that Sam is *here* , he's alive *somehow* . He might not be for long if the fight keeps going. Tommy lunges for the beast, who is too surprised by a sudden attack from another human to defend itself. Tommy aims for its eyes, hoping his nails are long enough to blind it and take Sam and fucking *run* . His blunt nails are at least still

sharp enough to break through the skin of the beast's face, raising pale rivets of blood in their wake.

The beast yelps and stumbles backward at Tommy's attack, trying to block its eyes. Someone grabs him around the waist and lifts him off of the beast and for a moment Tommy thinks it's Techno and is about to start thrashing furiously, but then he is flipped and thrown onto his back. Tommy wheezes, the wind knocked out of him, and then Sam is hovering over him, snarling animalistically.

Tommy takes a moment to just *stare* . Sam is alive. Tommy barely registers the fact that he's being *attacked* right now, which is honestly a little out of character but-

Oh, right. Disguise.

Tommy's hand darts up to his face, avoiding Sam's attempts to restrain him, and swipes his goggles and bandana off of his face.

Sam's mouth opens slightly, like he's not quite sure of what he's seeing. He lets out a shaky breath and reaches a gloved hand to Tommy's face, like he's checking that he's really here.

"Tommy?" He breathes, and god, Tommy missed him. "Kiddo?"

"Sam," Tommy says, voice bordering on a sob.

"How are you alive- how are you *here* -" Sam begins, though he freezes when a ball of crumpled paper hits him in the side of the head. The crowd is booing now, bored by the lack of bloodlust the two humans are displaying. Sam looks out at the swath of people. Tommy follows his gaze, latching onto his crew, who are all holding onto each other, some trembling. In rage or in fear Tommy doesn't know. He would feel bad about abandoning them to join the pit if it wasn't for the person in it. He can't leave Sam behind, not now. Not ever.

Sam turns towards the beast, and Tommy tenses. He'd almost forgotten it was in the ring with them. The beast stares at them for a moment before stepping towards the front of the canvas-covered circle and stretches an arm out at the two of them.

"I suppose we have a new competitor," The beast says, voice surprisingly soft for their stature. "I bet none of you have seen human versus human! Place your bets!"

Tommy whips his head back towards Sam, terrified.

"I don't want to fight you," He hisses.

"You don't have to," Sam mutters. "Follow my lead."

Sam rolls off of him, groaning like Tommy had gotten a hit in, and Tommy stands, wobbly and unsure. Sam throws a punch at Tommy's face, but there is no power behind it, and Tommy has no issue ducking out of the way.

"Holy shit, I thought you were *dead* ," Tommy says in English, hoping the aliens in the crowd would think they were speaking in some sort of war-cry.

"I thought *you* were dead," Sam replies, laughing. Tommy can see tears in his eyes that he's sure are mirrored in his. Tommy dives for him, but Sam dances around him. It's kind of... fun? It reminds Tommy of playfighting when he was a kid. Sam seems to share that sentiment, a wide smile on his face.

"I'm too much of a big man to die," Tommy protests, locking their hands in a grapple.

"Tommy, I'm sorry I couldn't get you off the ship," Sam says, smile dimming into something deeply sad. Tommy hesitates slightly, and Sam kicks a leg out from under him, though he keeps a firm grip on the front of his shirt to keep him from hitting the ground too hard. "I... I didn't want to leave without you, I fought back, but-"

"I heard the shot," Tommy admits, voice quiet. Sam looks at him, face sick with grief. In another life, Tommy may have called it pity, but he knows how it feels now, to be on the other end of tragedy.

"I'm sorry," Sam says, putting his hands around Tommy's neck. "You should never have had to deal with that."

"It happens," Tommy says. He can't shrug because Sam is pretending to choke him out, but the feeling is there. Tommy brings his hands up to try to pry Sam's hands off of his neck, though he puts no effort into it. The sooner he gets this over with the sooner he can get Ranboo to teleport the two of them out of here and they can just get off this stupid fucking planet with its stupid fucking markets.

Tommy lets his hands fall and his head go limp. He hears Tubbo shriek in rage, lost somewhere in the wave of cheers. The beast walks back over and nudges Tommy with its clawed foot. Tommy resists the urge to snap at it.

"Looks like we have our winner," The beast announces. "Everyone give it up for the Warden!" The crowd erupts into screaming cheers. Sam doesn't revel in the fanfare, he just picks Tommy up and slings him over his shoulder. He goes to walk out of the pit, but Tommy taps his chest when he knows the crowd won't see it.

"Wait, wait," He hisses. "My crew is probably losing their shit right now, don't leave without them."

"Who's your crew?" Sam whispers back, keeping his face blank.

"The captain is an elytrain with a stupid hat," Tommy says. Sam nods, apparently, that's enough to find them. Sam stands behind the beast, Tommy still slung over his shoulder even as the crowd begins to disperse. The beast is talking to his crew, who are all staring at him with unmasked rage. Except for Phil, who looks murderous in the way a dormant volcano is murderous.

"Are you his... handlers?" The beast says, sounding a little too polite to be natural. His crew is silent for several seconds.

"Sure," Phil says, voice cool in its anger. "Let's go with that."

"Okay, why don't you come backstage with me then. We can discuss business." The beast says.

The walk to the door behind the pit is... awkward to say the least. Tommy can't figure out how to signal to his crew that he's okay without also alerting the beast. He certainly would like his crew to stop glaring daggers at his cellmate, though, he would really rather his two families get along.

It seems like until Tommy can convince them that Sam didn't *actually* just choke him out for a crowd of screaming fans, they might be off to a bit of a rocky start.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Cw:

//Slavery mention

Also sorry 4 da late update I had school stuff

Tommy remains silent, slung over Sam's shoulder and wincing internally at the tense silence that hangs between his crew and the beast and just as much at the tightness of his stitches as the skin of his stomach is pulled tight. He says nothing, and he makes no indication of his pain. He doesn't want the beast to know he's awake, and he can't alert his crew.

Sam leads the small group, stopping at a door with a peeling sticker of a star on the door. He nudges the door open with his foot and tosses Tommy onto the couch. Sam hovers over him like he's waiting for Tommy to get up, but like hell is Tommy going to move a muscle while the beast still stands over him looking like the goddamned grim reaper. Sam frowns at him, nudging at his shoulder, hand never leaving his skin, as though Tommy would vanish to nothingness the moment Sam broke contact.

"You can get up," He says in English. "We're out of the crowd now."

If Tommy's eyes were open he'd be giving Sam a bewildered look right now, but as it stands he can't do anything more than twitch his eyelids. He watches through his eyelashes as Sam frowns, and then sees realization flicker in those green eyes, so human it hurts. He turns to the beast, who still stands over the couch beside his crew, who are all bristling in their own ways.

"Oh, are you scared of him?" Sam asks, pointing a thumb towards the beast. Tommy jolts a bit at being addressed, but doesn't answer. Tommy thinks the better question is why Sam *isn't* scared of a nine-foot-tall abomination that just beat the shit out of him. "Bad, take five okay?" Sam says in Common, and the beast- Bad? Gives Tommy a sympathetic look before taking a step towards the door.

"Alright, just call me when you're done." Bad says, voice so gentle and friendly sounding that it nearly makes Tommy laugh. He walks past Tommy's crew and gives them a disdainful look as he ducks out the door.

As soon as the door closes behind the beast, Tommy is on his feet, tugging at Sam's sleeve, gaze darting around to find an open window, a back door, fuck it- a vent. Why not go back to old habits? Tommy's eagerness to run the fuck away and take Sam back to their ship is quickly halted when Techno slams all however-many-pounds of pure muscle into Sam, pinning him to the wall. Sam is immediately snarling and scratching, even as Phil tries to pull the two apart.

"Technoblade!" Phil snaps, making the piglin pause in his assault. Sam gets a good hit on him, slugging him in the side of the face and making the piglin snap his teeth too close to Sam's throat for Tommy's liking.

"Stop!" Tommy and Phil both say, voices intertwining. Though their languages are vastly different they both mean the same thing. Phil pulls Techno away by the back of his cape, and this time the piglin does not resist. Sam makes no attempt to chase after him, to finish the fight, only gravitates back towards Tommy, hands hovering. Checking on him. Sam slots into place next to him, pressing their shoulders together. Sam is an observant man, Tommy knows this from his time shared with him in Dream's ship, so he knows that Sam sees the way Techno twitches forward when Sam stands beside Tommy. He sees the way his lip curls up to display his teeth in a way that is far from friendly, even by human standards. Sam pretends not to have seen it, too focused on fixing Tommy's hair or muttering something that could be quiet, private thank-you's to whatever god Sam believes in.

"You saw what he did to Tommy," Techno is snarling, teeth flashing. "He wanted to help him and that monster *attacked* him!"

"He didn't," Phil sighs. He turns to Sam, who stares at Tommy's captain with quiet contemplation. "Did you?"

"No sir," Sam mutters. "Of course not."

This admission settles Tommy's crew down, though Tubbo still glares at Sam with unmasked rage.

"The... Warden, right?" Phil asks, feathers ruffled even now that the danger had passed.

"Call me Sam," Sam says, bowing slightly. Phil awkwardly mimics the movement before freezing.

"Your name is Sam?" He asks, taking a small step forward. " *Tommy's* Sam?"

Sam smiles, arm moving to wrap around Tommy and pull him in a little closer.

"Yeah," He says, sounding almost reverent. "Tommy's Sam."

For a moment, the room is plunged into silence. Stunned now, not icy like it had been a few minutes ago.

"We can get you out," Tubbo blurts out. Sam furrows his brow.

"Out?"

"Back to our ship," Tubbo explains hurriedly. "Ranboo can teleport, we don't even have to leave the room."

"I- I cant just *leave* ," Sam protests, looking bewildered at the crew's intensity.

"You can," Tommy says quietly.

"No wait, I think there's been a misunderstanding-" Sam says, but his sentence is cut off by the door opening. The beast peaks his head through, wide white eyes staring at them, sending a shudder down Tommy's spine.

"Hey guys, just making sure everything-"

The beast doesn't get to finish its sentence before Tommy is once again lunging forward. The beast squeaks and shuts the door with a click. Tommy huffs in irritation at the intrusion and goes back to Sam's side.

"I appreciate the protectiveness, Tommy," Sam says with a grin. "But I'm afraid it's unnecessary."

"Unnessaccary?" Tommy snaps. "It just beat the *shit* out of you!" Sam winces.

"Yeah, you weren't exactly supposed to see that." He says. "I'm glad you did though, or I don't know when I ever would have found you."

"...Me too." Tommy says begrudgingly, hanging his head. He's sure his crew isn't following most of the conversation, what with it being in English, but Tommy is too caught up in the ease of his own first language to care about the others in the room. He can catch them up later. Sam hums.

"Do you remember when we were back on Dream's ship," Sam begins, making Tommy jolt slightly at the casual mention of the thing that ruined him. "And I would tell you about that time I saw that WWE show?"

"Vaguely," Tommy says, scrunching up his face. "Maybe you don't remember, big man, but I was a little preoccupied back then."

"I remember," Sam says, darkness intertwining his words for a moment. He clears his throat. "Well, remember when I said I was in the front row, and I could see that the wrestlers weren't really hitting each other? That it was all show?"

"So..." Tommy drawls, trying to wrap his brain around what Sam is telling him, and to quell the still racing adrenaline in his veins. "He wasn't hurting you?"

"Nope," Sam says with a smile. "But it pays big money to see someone fighting a human."

For some reason, that's what breaks Tommy.

He leans forward, resting his forehead against Sam's shoulder, and starts to cry.

"I thought you were dead," Tommy mutters into the fabric of Sam's tracksuit. Sam brings his arms up to wrap around Tommy. He can feel the way Sam's hands shake against him.

"I know," Sam whispers, voice trembling. "I thought- I'm glad you're here. I'm glad you're okay."

They stand there in silence for a minute. Tommy's crew doesn't try to interrupt them. Sam is swaying slightly, rocking Tommy in place.

"We can get you back to our ship," Tommy says, repeating what Tubbo had insisted.

"I- hold on. Hold on," Sam says, pulling back. "You need to meet everyone first."

"Everyone?" Tommy says nervously.

"My crew," Sam clarifies.

"Is your *crew* alright with you being in the fighting ring?" Phil asks, feathers fluffed up in concern. Sam shrugs.

"I mean, they're usually the ones fighting me, so I hope so."

Tommy leans in to whisper in Sam's ear, though he likely doesn't need to if he speaks fast enough in English then none of his crew will be able to understand him anyway.

"They're not... keeping you here, right? It's not like last time?" Tommy asks, embarrassed to hear the way his voice shakes, making him sound much younger than he really is. Much younger than he feels, at least.

"No," Sam assures him. "I was about to ask you the same question."

"They're good to me," Tommy says. "I- they're family."

"Good," Sam says, sounding endlessly relieved. "I'm glad."

The door opens again, and Tommy whips around snarling on instinct. The beast- *Bad* flinches back and moves to leave out the door again, but Sam laughs and puts a hand on his shoulder, pulling Tommy back.

"Tommy, meet my captain," Sam says with a broad smile. He looks happy, much happier than he ever was on Dream's ship. "Badboyhalo of the Badlands."

"The Badlands," Phil says, slipping back into the voice that means *'I have the upper hand and we both know it'*. "Hm, I've heard of you. Didn't expect you to have a human in your ranks."

"I've heard of your crew as well, the Sleepy Bois," Bad says, equally frosty in his politeness. "I didn't think you employed... illegally."

"Sleepy Boi's *Inc* ," Phil corrects pointedly. "And I assure you, though we may be... bending the law, Tommy is on our ship of his own volition, and we will fight too keep him here."

Bad shoots Sam a look that Tommy can't decipher, not yet used to Bad's body language or expressions, which are somewhat limited based on his... lack of a traditional face. Sam nods, and Bad shifts his demeanor and turns his attention to Tommy.

"You're not... *enslaved* , are you Tommy?" Bad asks in geltly spoken English, eyes finally landing on the youngest in the room. Tubbo leaps forward, outraged.

"What the fuck kind of question is that!" Tubbo growls, putting himself in between Tommy and Bad, the height difference between the three of them almost laughable. It becomes a lot less funny when Technoblade is the next to take a threatening step forward.

"No," Tommy says loudly, holding an arm out to stop his crew from attacking Sam's captain. "They're family."

Bad watches his face for a moment, seemingly trying to read him for any lies, and then breaks into a wide, awkward smile. Tommy can tell it is not a natural gesture for him, his mouth pulling a little to hard at the edges to be real, but he's trying to put Tommy at ease, and he can appreciate that.

"Well then, It's lovely to meet you all." He says. "Tommy, I've heard a lot about you. As for the rest of you, we'll have to get more acquainted. Except for you, Captain. I've heard about you."

If Phil hears the thinly veiled threat in his voice he does not react to it, instead only walking towards the door.

"Any friend of Tommy's is a friend of ours," Phil says, heading to the door, though Tommy does not miss the way he refuses to turn his back to Bad. Tommy follows Sam eagerly, though the rest of his crew are more hesitant to follow.

"Come on," Sam says with a wide smile. "Let's go meet the rest of my crew!"

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

cw

talk of nonconsensual body mods

talk of kidnapping

They don't walk back through the market, which Tommy is grateful for. He doesn't want to see the cages, and by the way that Sam's hand squeezes around his when he hears the metal bars rattling, Tommy is pretty sure he shares the sentiment. Instead, they take what Bad calls 'the back way', which turns out to be a maze of alleys woven in between abandoned buildings. Mostly abandoned at least, there are a good number of squatters glaring at them, but they look back at the ground when they catch Sam or Tommy's eye. Tommy doesn't usually like being feared, but if it keeps greedy fingers off of his skin then he's all for it. Tommy watches Bad prod at the shallow scratches on his face from where Tommy had tried to gouge out his eyes. He's probably going to have to apologize for that at some point, but Tommy has more pressing things to deal with right now. Like making sure Sam never leaves his sight again.

Bad must catch him watching him mess with the wounds on his face, because he gives him a small smile.

"I'm okay," He reassures cheerfully. "I've had much worse, I promise."

"I'm not sure that's gonna reassure him, Bad," Sam says, laughter running through his voice. Suddenly, Tommy feels bitter. Sam is happy without him, he's got his own life he's built and sure, Tommy is *happy* for him. He's *happy* with the way things turned out. They've both got their own families, that's *good*. Just...

Sam must notice his sudden silence, because he turns to look at him even as he keeps walking.

"What's the matter?" He asks. Tommy twists his fingers where he's holding onto the back of Sam's tracksuit.

"Why... why didn't you take me with you?" Tommy asks, voice small. Bad stops suddenly, and Sam runs into him. Bad apologizes quietly and keeps walking, a bit more briskly now.

"I- Tommy, please, *please* don't ever think I would have left you if I had a choice," Sam says, sounding a bit choked up. "I tried to go back for you- I promise."

"Then... why didn't you?" Tommy asks again. He needs an answer. Sam's eyes dart back to Bad. He isn't looking at them, facing a wall and taking deep breaths that make his shoulders rise and fall. Tommy's crew is silent too. They've all stopped walking.

"They thought... the Badlands didn't know I was... sapient," Sam says lamely. "They raid poacher ships they just... didn't *know*. They didn't speak English, I tried to tell them you were back there- God, *God* I screamed at them to turn around until my voice went out."

"They didn't come back to feed me for days," Tommy admits into the back of Sam's jacket. Sam takes in a sharp breath.

"Tommy..." Sam says, something deeper than grief in his voice.

He goes silent. There is nothing more to say.

They walk, guided by Bad, back to the ship where Sam lives now. Tommy tries to shove down the bitterness that threatens to rise in the pit of his stomach as he stares at Bad's back. He's the captain. Even if he had the best of intentions, he gave the order to take Sam, to leave Tommy alone and dying on that ship. In that hell.

Tommy doesn't want to be bitter anymore, but it happens without his permission. He swallows it down so it won't get stuck in his throat and cause problems later. He wants to meet the rest of Sam's crew, he wants to see the life Sam has built for himself, even if Tommy isn't a part of it.

They walk for a while longer. Apparently, their pilot had landed them far away from the main market, according to Bad, there was less of a chance they would be robbed this way. According to Bad's quiet and slightly awkward explanations, the Badlands are planet hoppers, but pirates mostly. They raid poaching ships and give people rides across the galaxy when they need it, which is apparently how they got most of their crew. Bad says they make ends meet by hustling crowds in underground markets, which Sam is perfect for. Tommy must make a face at that, because they make a strange sound that may be a nervous giggle and turn away from Tommy.

When the conversation breaks, Sam is quick to fill it.

"Tommy, how exactly *did* you get off of Dream's ship?" Sam asks, cocking his head. "Did the SBI rescue you?"

"Uh, no," Tommy says rubbing the back of his neck slightly sheepishly. "I actually- so, okay you're not going to like this."

"Go on," Sam says, a slight warning in his voice.

"So after you died- or after I thought you died, I guess, I was the last one on the ship, so I kinda... didn't really *care* what happened to me?"

"Tommy," Sam says, sounding like his heart is breaking.

"I mean, there was no one left to miss me, and dying was better than rotting away in that cell." Tommy feels Ranboo headbutt his back, a show of affection according to the enderian. Tubbo makes a sad humming sound behind him, but Tommy pays them no mind. He knows it's sad. He's done being sad. "Stop being a bunch of sad sacks and let me tell the story, it's pretty badass."

"Fine, go ahead," Sam says, mouth quirking up a little in the corner. He makes a hand motion that means 'go on', and Tommy does not hesitate to do so.

"So some bitch came to bring me food, *finally*, but they must have been a newbie, and they were injured." Tommy swallows, a smile rising on his face at the memory of perhaps his greatest accomplishment. "So I kicked them in the chest and ran out. I was really weak because I'm *pretty* sure I was starving at the time, but they must have been worse off than me because they went down like a sack of shit. I ran to the front of the ship, I mean, I actually could have been running to the back since I didn't know directions, so it was pure luck that I ended up in the cockpit." Tommy swallows, not noticing the soft look Sam gives him at the sight of his smile, too caught up in the retelling of his epic escape.

"So I got into the cockpit and slammed the door shut. Dream- and I could tell it was him because of his loud ass screaming, started banging on the door so I barred it with a chair. I kinda... blanked out for a while, but I must have done something right because the next thing I knew there's this big orange planet in front of me. Dream was still screaming, but it sounded more scared than angry, so there's another win. I ended up kinda... losing control of the ship, and it crashed into a bunch of trees."

Tommy hesitates in his story. He barely remembers the next part, only the way he had choked on smoke and desperately tried to escape the flames. Lack of will to live be damned, everything in him wanted to be away from the wreckage.

"So I ended up running into the woods, but- you know, woods can only be so big, so I eventually ended up in this little town." Tommy laughs a bit at the memory. "Everyone started freaking out as soon as they saw me, but I was able to steal some food and everyone

was too pussy to stop me. I hid for a while, but eventually I saw this huge ass silver ship," Tommy pauses, a smile tracing the soft lines of his face. "I snuck in, obviously, because like fuck was I going to stay anywhere near Dream's ship. It turned out to be the SBI's ship, and the rest is history."

"You just let him hang out in your ship?" Sam asks, a look of disbelief coloring his expression. "I was under the impression that aliens weren't so... *affectionate* towards humans."

"No, we didn't let him 'hang out'," Phil says, amusement making his tail feathers ruffle. "He snuck into our vents, the little shit. By the time we realized we had a stowaway it was too late to do anything about it."

Tommy isn't going to bring up the whole 'being locked in a holding cell for five weeks' thing, tensions are high enough as it is.

"Good on you, kiddo," Sam says, ruffling his hair. Tommy leans into the touch, ignoring the way he hears Tubbo chuckle behind him. Tommy's rush of endorphins at having his hair touched is halted when he feels something coarse brush up against his head, and he instinctively reaches out to snag it. He catches Sam's wrist. The sleeve of his tracksuit has ridden up slightly, revealing that his arm is covered in coarse green... fur?

"What the fuck?" Tommy sputters. Sam pulls his arm out of Tommy's grip and frowns.

"I- yeah, that, uh. Well, you know, they didn't do the same kind of experiments on everyone." Sam says, nudging a rock with his foot. "They did a lot of genetic testing with me, so. You know."

"Are you- are you *okay*?" Tommy asks, taking a step towards Sam. Looking at him now, past the haze of relief that he's alive, Tommy can see what has changed since the last time he's seen him. The most obvious being the green hair, but Tommy had kind of just assumed he'd dyed it. Looking closer, he can see that the very tips are still blonde, like it had grown out green. His hair also trails in a thick stripe down the back of his neck, making it more of a mane than traditional hair. There is also the pointed quality to his ear, and- Tommy squints a bit. Yeah, his teeth are *definitely* sharper than when they last met.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Tommy asks, feeling only a little hurt at the fact that Sam had not divulged the information that he was having his genetics messed with before being taken by the Badlands.

"I mean... I didn't know what they were doing." Sam sighs, pushing his hair out of his face. "I only realized when my hair started growing in green, and that was weeks after I... left."

They're walking again, their conversation propelled mainly by inertia.

"Does it hurt?" Tommy asks. Sam hesitates before he speaks.

"I won't lie to you, Tommy, yeah. They changed the structure of my *bones* , I don't think I'll ever be at peak condition again. Not like how it was. It's better some days than others but... it doesn't ever go away." Tommy appreciates that Sam isn't lying to him about his condition, but he still feels a sting of grief at his friend's pain.

They walk in silence for a while longer after that, apparently, no one has a good response to *that* little tidbit of information. Bad clears his throat, making Tommy look up. The captain is gesturing to a ship, much smaller than the SBI and most of it looks cobbled together. Tommy does *not* know how it's survived space travel.

"Here we are!" Bad says, voice cheerful, strung through with relief at being out of the market. Tommy can't say he doesn't share his sentiment. "The Badlands'!"

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

cw

-amputation mention (not graphic)

Almost as soon as Bad finishes speaking, the door of the ship slams open, and a small figure is barreling out. Tommy is unperturbed by this, used to his own crew's dramatic entrances, until he realizes the figure is heading straight towards him. He doesn't have time to do anything about it before the figure is tackling him to the ground in a hug that utilizes both the alien's arms and legs.

"Sammy!" The figure cheers. "You're back!"

The creature looks up at him, a multicolored mask hiding everything but slitted eyes.

"Oh hey," They say plainly. "You're not Sam." Tommy shoves the stranger off of him with a small snarl.

"Great observational skills, bitch," Tommy grumbles, getting to his feet and dusting himself off. The stranger is looking at Sam, head tilted inquisitively. They're shaped like a human, minus the tail that sways behind them, ending in red, leaf-like protrusions, and their two-fingered hands and feet.

"Ponk," Sam greets, so Tommy is guessing that's the stranger's name. "Meet Tommy."

"Oh, cool-" Ponk pauses his movements, his constant swaying and bouncing coming to a halt. " *Oh* ," He says again, sounding surprised. A hand reaches out to intertwine with Sam's, a bit awkwardly thanks to the differing number of fingers. "It's nice to meet you, Tommy." He says, something warm in his voice. He turns to Sam and says in a loud whisper.

"I didn't expect him to be taller than you,"

Tommy bursts into laughter, and he can hear his crew chuckling behind him. Tommy decides he likes this guy.

The inside of the Badlands is just as cobbled together as the outside, a meshed together amalgamation of parts that is all undeniably lived-in and well-loved. There are blankets strewn over the backs of couches and chairs, and sheets hung up in the place of doors. There is so much furniture that Tommy has to wonder how it doesn't all go sliding around when the ship takes off. He doesn't have time to check if it's bolted down before someone (something?) noses through the fabric of the doorway. Whatever it- *they*? Are, they're cat-sized, a forked tail winding around itself, its pointed ears twitch in Tommy's direction before it launches itself up into Bad's arms. The captain puts the... thing on his shoulder where it sits delicately.

"Who the fuck are you?" It says, making Tommy shout in surprise and stumble backward. The cat-thing purrs in what Tommy can only assume is amusement. Bad clears his throat, jostling the cat-thing on his shoulders.

"Ant, be nice. This is Tommy." Bad says. Tommy doesn't miss the way he speaks, the little emphasis he puts on Tommy's name. Like this is an important introduction. Ant makes an interested little rumbling noise and leaps from Bad's shoulders into Sam's arms, where Sam holds him like a baby with an exasperated sigh.

"Well, hello!" Ant says twin tails flicking behind him. "Who are the rest of these people then?"

"That would be Tommy's crew," Sam says, adjusting Ant in his arms. "Where are the others, by the way, I want Tommy to meet them."

"Waiting for you to get back," Ant says, climbing onto Sam's shoulders now. "Probably in the cockpit."

"Then that's where we're going," Sam says, grabbing onto Tommy's hand. "Come on Tommy. And Tommy's friends."

"We have names," Tubbo mutters, but doesn't protest following the two humans in their stint to find the rest of Sam's crew.

Ant's claim was right, judging by the blue glow from beyond the curtained doorway of the cockpit, that's where the rest of the crew is. Sam goes in first, Tommy lingering in the hallway. He's strangely... nervous. He wants to make a good impression on Sam's family, and good first impressions aren't something humans excel at. Sam turns to look at him, and Tommy is not quick enough to wipe the nervous look off his face, because Sam gives him a sad smile and moves back to his side.

"What're ya' makin' that face for?" Sam asks, bumping their shoulders together, making Ant hiss in irritation at being jostled.

"I just..." Tommy starts, watching as Ant leaps at Phil, where the startled elytrian catches him in his arms. "I want to make a good impression."

Sam giggles, bending backward a little as he laughs. Tommy catches an interested look on Wilbur's face, and it suddenly strikes Tommy how strange it must be for the crew to meet another human. It would be weird for him to meet another elytrian or something, after all.

"Tommy, my first day here I took off Ponk's arm," Sam says. Tommy's mouth drops open in surprise at the easy admittance.

"It's true," Ponk says, sidling up next to the two of him, gesturing with his right arm... or what's left of it anyway. True to his word, it's been severed about halfway up his bicep, black hoodie tied to keep the empty sleeve from getting in the way. Tommy squints, not at the amputation, but instead at the logo on his hoodie.

"Are you wearing *Supreme*?" He asks incredulously. Ponk bounces in place, holding out the front of his hoodie, which is entirely too big on him, so Tommy can read the lettering better.

"Yah!" He says proudly. "Bought it from some weird market! They said it's clothes only human royalty wears."

"Huh," Tommy says, turning back towards Sam.

"Come on," He says quietly, a wide smile on his face. "They'll be happy to meet you."

Tommy is gently tugged into the cockpit which.... really looks more like a sleepover than somewhere people fly spaceships. There is a massive pile of blankets in the middle of the room, where another alien lays, watching a movie being projected on the ceiling. The lights are dim and the air is warm and hazy, it almost makes Tommy feel bad about intruding.

Almost.

Sam clears his throat loudly, and the person sitting in the blanket pile sits up, hair messy and sheeplike ears flopping around their face.

"Huh?" They say sleepily. Another, much smaller alien rises out of the pile as well. Tommy hadn't seen them, but he doesn't blame himself for that, not when this new crewmember caps off at just about two feet. The two-foot-tall alien looks like they're made of crystal, not just coated in it, either, but full-on *made* of it. Tommy knows this because they're slightly translucent and if Tommy squints he can see through them. The crystal-alien takes a step forward, eyes on Bad, and then stops when his gaze lands on Tommy.

"Uh... Sam? Did you change your hair?" He asks, tilting his head. Tommy sputters in surprise and yanks Sam out from where he is standing behind Tommy's back, out of the alien's field of vision. "Oh, you've kidnapped another human, awesome!" The crystal-alien jokes brightly. Out of the corner of his eye, Tommy can see Bad give a full-body flinch.

"Not the time, Skeppy," He says softly. Skeppy, and if Tommy wasn't used to strange alien names at this point he would be laughing, looks a bit cowed, stepping forward to give Bad a hug. It isn't very effective, as Skeppy doesn't even come up to Bad's, strange, inward bending knees, but Bad bends down and lifts Skeppy up into a proper hug anyway. Tommy rips his eyes away from the disgusting display of affection and comes face to face with the goat alien.

Well, more like face to stomach. She's not much taller than Tubbo.

"Hello, new human!" She says jovially, sticking a hand out. Tommy takes it, marveling quietly at her hooved hands. "This is a human thing Sam taught me." She says in a whisper as she shakes Tommy's hands.

Tommy chuckles quietly as the goat woman introduces herself.

"I'm Captain Puffy," She says, finally letting go of his hand.

"Captain... I thought Bad was the captain?" Tommy says, brows furrowed as he jabs a thumb towards the... whatever Bad is.

"Oh, no. He is. Captain is my first name, Puffy is my family name." She explains with an amused air, like she's had to explain this before and still gets a kick out of it.

"So should I call you Capt-"

"No," She interrupts, waving a paw? Hoof? At him. "Just call me Puffy. I can't imagine how confusing it would be if there were *two* Captains. Now, what's your name?"

"Oh, I'm Tommy." He says, taken a little off guard by the goat woman's quick-paced and confusing introduction. Puffy has stopped talking now, and he can feel unfamiliar eyes on his back, so he knows Skeppy is staring at him too. Puffy looks over his shoulder, Tommy turns to see what she's looking at and sees Sam, looking soft and sad. He nods. When Tommy turns back towards Puffy, she looks near tears. Before Tommy can feel awkward, she blinks them away and replaces them with a smile.

"Well it's nice to meet you, Tommy," Puffy says. She leans in again and says in a whisper. "They're not holding you against your will, right?" Her eyes dart to the crew who still stand behind Tommy. He rolls his eyes, waving away Puffy's concern.

"Why does everyone keep asking that?" He gripes. Sam chuckles from behind him, putting a hand on his shoulder.

"It's not every day you see a human crewmember," Sam reminds him. "They're just making sure you're safe."

"He is," Techno says gruffly, looking very stiff and uncomfortable around all these new people. There is a beat of silence.

"If Tommy says he's safe, then I trust him," Sam says decisively. "Now why don't all of you talk, I want to show Tommy around the ship."

Before any of Tommy's crew can protest, and he knows that they would, Sam grabs him by the wrist and tugs him out of the room, a wide smile on his face.

"I have to show you my lab!" He says around a giddy laugh. "I've wanted-" Sam cuts himself off. Tommy can see he doesn't know how to finish his sentence, but he thinks he knows what Sam was going to say. Tommy feels the same way.

"Well then let's go see it!" Tommy says with a wry grin of his own. Sam's expression matches his own, and Tommy's heart gives a strange pang of misplaced homesickness to see another human's face outside of the mirror.

Sam does not wait for him to finish his quiet crisis, instead turning and tugging him down the hall towards the life that he's built. Tommy tries not to feel too bitter at the fact that he did it without him.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Sorry I've been inactive!! I have a play coming up and school is kicking my ass but still I write

Apparently, when Sam says *lab*, he actually means 'workshop', because Tommy absolutely certain that any *actual* scientist would see the clutter of the room and have about four stimulations aneurysms.

"This place is an accident waiting to happen," Tommy says, kicking a slightly charred fire blanket out of his path. Sam chuckles, throwing his mask onto his desk with a clang of metal-on-metal.

"Yeah," He agrees dreamily. "But it's *my* accident waiting to happen."

"What do you even *do* in here?" Tommy asks, peeking at a twisted piece of broken machinery that is smouldering slightly.

"I build stuff," Sam answers easily. "I invent little trinkets, you know? I like to keep my hands busy."

Tommy hums in agreement, he knows the feeling. Sam pauses in his movements, back turned to Tommy. His hands still on the bits of wire he'd been winding together.

"Tommy... are they *really* good to you?" Sam asks, voice uncharacteristically serious. A burst of exasperation rises up in Tommy, but is squashed just as quickly. He's been wondering the same thing about Sam, really.

"Yeah," He says, as honest as he can make it. "Are you... are you happy here, then?" Tommy asks. He manages to keep the bitterness out of his voice, but Sam turns anyway and wraps him in a hug. They are silent for a long time, just holding onto each other.

"They... make me happy," Sam says slowly, choosing his words carefully. "But Tommy... the pain was... almost too much."

"Pain?" Tommy asks with a frown, thinking of his friend's new... enhancements.

"Of losing you," Sam clarifies. "Or- of thinking I lost you, I guess."

Sam pulls out of the hug, rubbing his eyes.

"I swore- I *swore* to myself I would protect you," Sam says, more to himself than to Tommy. "And I could have gotten both of us out and I *didn't*."

"There was nothing you could do," Tommy says into the shoulder of Sam's tracksuit. "They didn't know."

There is a pause.

"It's okay to be angry, Tommy," Sam murmurs. "That they took me away."

Tommy refuses to acknowledge the furious tears that are gathering in the corners of his eyes.

"I was angry," Sam admits. "I was angrier than I'd ever been in my *life*. I was so angry... if I was stronger, if I wasn't starving and sick, I would have killed them." Tommy hums. He knows the feeling. "I... Ponk went behind Bad's back to try to talk to me, since he spoke a little bit of English, and I attacked him. Their species are a lot more delicate than humans, so I did more damage than I meant to."

Tommy thinks back to Ponk's tied-off sleeve. He doesn't need to ask what happened.

"I... God, when I started learning Common, I think the first thing I said was telling them you were back there on the ship." Sam chuckles, but there's no humor in it. "Bad ran out of the room when he realized what he'd done. I think he threw up."

"I'm angry," Tommy admits, spurred on by Sam's own admission. "I want to hate them, but I also don't. They're your family now, I want to- I want to love who you love."

"Give it time," Sam says. "No one expects you to be fine with them immediately. I think they're still getting used to the fact that you're still alive."

They sit there for a while longer, holding on to each other.

"This is so *weird*," Tommy breathes. Sam lets out a noise somewhere between a laugh and a sob. "I really thought you were dead. I cried to a *Radiohead* song."

Sam doubles over with laughter, choking on his spit.

"You- Oh my God, that's so funny." He says around breathless laughter. " *Please* tell me it was Creep."

"It wasn't *Creep*," Tommy shrieks, punching Sam in the arm.

"Ohhh Sam," He warbles in a poor mimic of Tommy's voice. "I miss you so much, I'm a creep... I'm a weirdo-"

Tommy tackles Sam to the ground with a shriek of rage.

"I take it back," Tommy says from where he's sitting on Sam's chest, making him wheeze against the teenager's weight. "I never missed you one bit, you're a wrongun."

"But am I a creep?" Sam asks with a shit-eating grin. "Am I a weirdo?"

"You're a bitch!" Tommy sings loudly. "You're a bitchboy~!"

They devolve into matching fits of laughter, growing louder when Sam rises up with a mock roar and attempts to wrestle Tommy to the ground. Sam's hand presses against his stitches and Tommy sucks in a sharp breath at the pain and pulls away. Sam freezes, eyes wide and fearful.

"Are you okay?" Sam asks worriedly, stepping closer, hands reaching to check on Tommy. "I didn't hurt you right?"

"No," Tommy says, gentle hand pressed over his closed wound. "I just- I got hurt there a while ago."

He feels a little bad about lying to Sam, but he doesn't think he'll take the news that Tommy went under Wilbur's knife very well. It's not like he'll ever find out about it anyway, so there's no harm in lying. Suspicion flits over Sam's face, but it is gone just as quickly as it arrived.

"You shouldn't be roughhousing if you're injured, Tommy." Sam scolds. Tommy rolls his eyes.

"Oh my God you are such a *dad*," Tommy groans, flopping over a desk. He's laying across a few bits of pokey metal, but it's a price he's willing to pay for dramatics. "It's been a *long* time since I've been able to roughhouse, let me live."

"I guess I'm lucky to have Bad on the crew," Sam says, sitting on the counter beside Tommy. "He's pretty sturdy."

"He's stupidly tall," Tommy gripes, flipping over so he's lying on his back.

"Yup," Sam agrees. "He's an amimonium."

"That's a mouthful,"

"Yup," Sam agrees, stretching his arms above his head luxuriously.

"All my crew are like tissue paper," Tommy complains. "Except Techno, but he won't wrestle with me anymore because he accidentally gave me a concussion once and now he's paranoid."

Sam side-eyes him suspiciously, and Tommy is quick to jump to his friend's defense.

"I said *accidentally*, you worry wort." Tommy gripes. "He apologized and everything." Sam hums, sounding unconvinced, but Tommy is distracted by something more interesting than the half-finished inventions that scatter the workshop.

On a table that is uncharacteristically tidy compared to the rest of the room sits a strange collection of items on top of a length of red fabric. The centerpiece of the collection is a scrap of paper, a photo. Tommy gets to his feet, drawn to the strange assortment of items. Sam makes a noise of protest behind him, but Tommy doesn't falter. There are small candies wrapped in shiny foil scattered on the table, wilted flowers and fresh ones laid in a ring, small animals carved of wood, as Tommy gets closer he can see they're painted to look like cows. Homemade-looking candles, some fresh and unlit, some burned down to the table surround the red cloth. In the center is a black and white photo of Tommy, looking exhausted and scared.

"What is this?" Tommy whispers. He already knows.

"I... there was no way to get you a gravestone." Sam says quietly. "I couldn't bury you either, so I figured an altar was the next best thing." Tommy's fingers brush the photo, careful not to damage it, even though it is already faded and singed at the edges.

"Where did you get this?" Tommy breathes.

"I found it in the wreckage of the ship," Sam says, voice hard with lingering grief. "I went to see if you... had lived. There was no one there, but I think they took pictures of all of us."

"Creepy," Tommy says distantly, still prodding at the offerings. It makes something strange and metallic rise up in his throat that they're for him. It hadn't really hit him yet that to Sam, he was dead. Just as much as Sam was dead to Tommy. He doesn't like thinking about it.

"I guess I can take this down now," Sam says around a sigh. "Since you're alive."

"Yeah," Tommy agrees.

Neither of them move to do so.

"I bet the others are waiting for us," Sam says, and Tommy latches onto the subject change with an eagerness surprising even him.

"Yeah, I'd be surprised if they aren't killing each other by now," Tommy says, grabbing onto Sam's wrist. "Let's go."

Arrival back into the control room of the Badlands is not a bloodbath of screaming aliens like Tommy had half-expected, but is still a chaotic scene. Skeppy has situated himself on top of Techno's shoulders, where the piglin is diligently pretending not to notice while Skeppy terrorizes Bad by insisting that, since he's suddenly grown a good four feet, he's the new captain.

"You're already my co-captain," Bad is insisting. "We are *both* co-captains."

"I've given up the co-captain lifestyle," Skeppy says haughtily, tugging at Techno's short fur. The piglin huffs in irritation but makes no move to remove Skeppy from his perch. "I'm staging a mutiny."

"Two people cant stage a mutiny!" Bad insists, voice rising in pitch with his irritation. "One of you isn't even a member of this crew!"

"*Two* people?" Skeppy asks, whipping his head around to look around. "You need to get your vision checked Bad, there's only one of me."

"We're back," Sam announces, halting the chaos for a moment. Techno leans backward and Skeppy slides off of his back, unable to keep his grip. He hits the floor with a heavy thud, but doesn't seem too bothered, getting to his feet almost immediately to greet Sam.

"Oh good, you're back," Phil says, looking immensely relieved. "Things were starting to get a little out of hand."

"What do we do now?" Tubbo asks from where he is perched in the rafters. Tommy startles at being spoken to from ten feet up, but quickly calms down, used to his friend's antics.

"Well, I want to show Sam our ship," Tommy says. "And if the rest of his crew want to come too they can." Tommy adds as an afterthought.

Had Phil and Bad been of the same species, Tommy imagines that the faces they made in response to his idea would be completely identical.

"Sure thing kiddo," Phil says, sounding only *mostly* exhausted. "If it's alright with the Captain, of course."

"It's fine by me," Bad says, dipping his head. Tommy whoops in excitement, shaking Sam a little. Tubbo drops down onto his shoulders, sending both of them to the ground, and then Sam is laughing, so Tommy pulls him down into the pile by the sleeve, and then they're all laughing. Something bright and warm is burning in Tommy's chest, something he thought was gone forever.

He'd missed this.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Hello all! So I was gone for like 2 weeks because of a fun combination of school and near constant migraines <3

But I am on holiday break and so finally had time to write again!!!

Cw//
Blood ment

Upon Bad's insistence to not risk the walk back through the market, they end up flying back to where the SBI is stationed. It is a much more rattly ride than Tommy is used to, he ends up having to hold onto Sam's sleeve to avoid falling on his ass. How Sam manages to stand completely steady while the entire ship shudders around them Tommy has no idea. He must be used to it by now, after living on the ship for so long. The corner of Tommy's mouth twitches downward at the thought, but he swallows down the bitterness that rises up. If Sam could have, he would have come back for him. Sam goes to get his mask from the lab before he leaves the ship, and Tommy drifts to hold onto Phil's sleeve instead, feeling off-kilter and anxious now that Sam has left his sight. He returns, mask in hand, and the uneasiness is banished, for the most part.

They land after a flight lasting only a few minutes, and this time Tommy really does fall on his ass. Drawing a laugh from Sam before he helps him to his feet. Tommy sticks his tongue out at him as he rises, and then he spots the silver gleam of the SBI through the dirty window of the Badlands and can barely hold back his excitement to show Sam around his new home. He bounces on his heels, tugging Sam towards the door.

"Come on! I've gotta show you all the cool alien rocks I've stolen!" Tommy shouts, and the rest of both their crews follow, the two captains with exasperated expressions. Sam lets himself be dragged behind Tommy, a fond smile on his face as the two of them rush towards the hull of the SBI. Tommy watches Sam's expression, eager to see his reaction to his home. Sam is staring at it with wide, impressed eyes.

"You live here?" He says with a low whistle. "What the heck do you do to get a ship like this?"

"I... think we're a cargo ship?" Tommy says uncertainly. "Honestly, our captain is so fucking weird we just don't ask where all the money comes from." Sam gives a concerned hum but

allows the topic to drop so Tommy can lead him into the body of the ship after Phil presses his hand against a lock mechanism and opens the door.

"Wow," Is all Sam says when they enter, marveling at the tall ceilings and smooth edges where the walls and floor meet. Tommy tries not to feel too self-conscious about the mess, it's very clear that many of the things strewn about the living room belong to him. Sam only looks at the jacket thrown over the back of the couch with a sad fondness.

"Let me show you around!" Tommy says, bouncing in excitement. He drags Sam to the kitchen, and then to Wilbur's lab, where Sam breathes a sigh of relief at the chemistry setup in place of a biology one. They then move to Techno's training room, then to the hull, where they both skirt the wide windows to avoid any passersby from seeing them. Tommy skips over the med bay and goes straight to his room.

"This is my room!" He says, spinning to face Sam and holding his arms out proudly. "Sorry for the mess, I wasn't expecting any presumed-dead father figures to show up any time soon." Sam chuckles warmly, running his fingers over the wall.

"It's very... you," Sam says fondly.

"Is that an insult?" Tommy asks, crossing his arms.

"No, no!" Sam laughs. "Its... I missed you."

Tommy softens, letting his arms fall to his side and stepping forward to be wrapped in another hug.

"I can't handle all these hugs," Tommy mutters, though he makes no move to pull away. "I'm gonna be all hugged-out."

"Get used to it," Sam chuckles. "I've been wanting to hug you for what? Four months now?"

"More like four and a half," Tommy corrects.

"Four and a half," Sam agrees easily. "What else is in your ship?"

Tommy pulls out of the hug reluctantly.

"There are the other's rooms, but you know, they value 'privacy' or whatever," Tommy scoffs, making Sam laugh again. "I can show you the vents?"

"Your little hiding spot?" Sam asks, a teasing lilt in his voice. Tommy chuckles, ignoring the tightness in his throat that occurs whenever he thinks about the vents.

"Yeah, I'm a right stowaway," Tommy says, hoping Sam doesn't see the tightness in his smile, the stiff set to his shoulders.

The intercom clicks on, Phil's voice coming through smoothly as it has since Wilbur spent a week fixing it.

"Tommy, we need you back here for a second," Phil's voice says from the ceiling. "Tubbo's getting a little... over-excited."

"Shit," Tommy sighs, getting to his feet. His stomach hurts at the idea of leaving Sam but like hell is he going to blow off his captain just to be clingy. "I've gotta go deal with... whatever it is Tubbo's gotten into now. I'll be back in a little bit, feel free to like, look around, or whatever."

Tommy walks down the hall to the main body, hoping whatever part of the ship Tubbo damaged wasn't too vital to the health and safety of those on board.

Sam feels a bit ill having Tommy out of his sight, but he isn't going to show it to the younger boy. The last thing he needs is to worry about Sam's hang-ups regarding the whole situation. Sam takes a shaky breath and stands from where he had been sitting at Tommy's desk. Tommy's desk, he thinks, a bit hysterically, picking up a sheet of paper littered with heavyhanded drawings of his crewmates. Seeing proof that he's not just alive, but living, is like a drowning man seeing land.

But it feels a little strange to be poking around Tommy's room when Sam hasn't been a part of his life for four-and-a-half months and he's too restless to sit and wait for the teenager to return, so he walks to the door and pokes his head out of the room. There is a door across from his with a neatly written nameplate in a language Sam can't read, so he cracks the door open and peeks his head in, hoping no one is inside. The room is empty, and not entirely interesting, bare of almost all personal effects other than a couple of pictures of the three youngest members of the ship together, the enderian at the center of all of them, so Sam assumes this must be his. With so little to investigate and the tenseness under his skin at the threat of someone seeing him poking around, Sam closes the door and moves to the next one.

The next nameplate is written in common, which Sam can read a bit of, so he knows it's their scientist's room. Sam doesn't trust Wilbur as far as he can throw him, which... is admittedly pretty far. Sam purses his lips and slides the door open.

It's pretty... normal. There is an instrument hanging on the wall above the bed and posters and photos hanging on the wall, a desk covered in crumpled papers. When Sam gets closer he can make out the drafts of songs, all written in common. He smiles at some of the sweeter lyrics before tearing his eyes away. He wouldn't want to see anything too personal after all.

When he turns his head, he smells something strange. He can't tell what it is, but he instinctively takes a step back. It almost smells like... rotting. It's not very strong, barely there, but once Sam notices he can't think about anything else. Sam wrinkles his nose. It's not the first time he's seen someone forget about a stash of food in their room, but it's nasty every time.

He steps closer to the closet and the smell gets stronger, so he takes another step. He opens the door a little wider from where it had lay ajar and traces the smell to the back corner, behind a rack of thick cloth. It's a bundle of yellow fabric covered with something dark and rank. Sam reaches out to touch it despite himself, and when he pulls his hands back there are flakes of dried blood on them. Brown, old, but fresh enough to stink. It smells like iron. He grabs the sweater, uncaring of the dried blood that flutters to the floor and down his front.

He can hear buzzing in his ears and acid rising in his throat. This is human blood. This is Tommy's blood. A thousand terrible scenerios rush through his head, but the final consensus is unshakeable. Wilbur is no different from the scientists on Dream's ship, and Tommy isn't safe. He's walking around, he's being treated like a person, at least when Sam and his crew are around, but he isn't safe. Wilbur had hurt Tommy, somehow. He's done something to make him bleed enough to soak through the thick fabric in his hands, and for whatever reason, Tommy is too scared to tell him.

There is a crunch as the fabric, stiff with blood is crumpled in Sam's grasp. The scientist is going to pay.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

hi and hello warnings for BLOOD and stuff

Heel to toe, Sam walks down the hall, yellow fabric bunched in his trembling grasp. His breath is coming in short bursts, teeth clenched in his anger. How dare he? How *dare* he lay a finger on Tommy, who has only so recently come back to Sam. How dare he draw blood? He wonders if phantlings have venom. He doesn't care. Humans are resilient, it's why he was taken, why Tommy was taken, and why he's not afraid to get into fights.

He reaches the body of the ship, he hears laughter from both his and Tommy's crew blending, but there is no warmth in his heart at the sound, not when he knows one of them is dangerous, a snake in the grass to someone he had sworn to protect. He had already failed Tommy once, he will not do it again.

He steps into the room and the voices go silent, all of them are familiar with human body language by now, they know something is wrong.

"What is this?" Sam asks, rage bubbling just below the strained surface of his voice. He holds out the blood-soaked sweater and watches Wilbur's face. His eyes widen a bit and he steps back, away from the evidence of what he's done.

"I-"

Wilbur doesn't get a chance to get any words out. Sam doesn't want to be swayed by pretty words and lies, he wants Wilbur to hurt just as much as he'd hurt Tommy. He will not fail him again.

Sam lunges, fingers outstretched and rakes his claws down Wilbur's face. The phantling goes down with a shriek, translucent-blue blood pooling in his hands where they guard his face, and the room erupts into clamor. Sam is not done, he descends upon the traitor with little in the ways of mercy. He's been in many fights, real and staged, and he knows what he's doing. He knows phantlings are delicate little things, more for words than violence, and he is a human who was made stronger and sharper by godless means.

Wilbur doesn't stand a chance. Sam is seeing red, blotting out his vision, obstructing the phantling's face. His rage is misplaced, he knows, most of it directed at long-dead scientists and the captain of that god awful ship, but they're gone, thanks to Tommy. He can't kill them now. He has to settle for the few that have hurt his boy and lived long enough for Sam to get his hands around his throat.

He fully intends to kill the phantling where he lays on the living room floor, hands already trembling and slick from the wounds on his face, but there are hands on his arms, pulling him back. Sam whips around, snarling, not seeing the shock and confusion on his crewmember's faces. It is Techno, their guard. Tommy's guard. He had let Tommy get hurt, he is just as guilty. He's as guilty as Sam is.

Sam has no hesitation in lashing out at the piglin as well, thrashing against his hold and bashing the back of his skull into his jaw. It is less than effective, given the piglins large tusks that slice into the thin skin of his scalp and send the warm flow of blood down the back of his neck, caking into his long hair. Still, it works and the piglin's hold loosens, letting Sam break free, whipping around to attack him as he had their scientist. He pulls an arm back, dead set on punching their guard square in the face, but then Tommy is in front of him, and Sam stops.

"What are you fucking *doing*? " Tommy shrieks, holding his arms out to block Techno. Sam shoves the sweater at Tommy, who backs away, curling his lip in disgust.

"I found *this* in the back of Wilbur's closet," He snaps, shooting a glare to the phantling, looking dazed, but alive, being supported by their captain. "What the fuck did you do to him?" Sam snarls, taking another step towards Wilbur before his arm is grabbed again. Sam whips around with a snarl, faltering when he sees it's Tommy.

"My appendix burst, he was the one who did the surgery," Tommy says quietly. "Wilbur saved my life."

The gravity of what Sam has just done hits him square in the face.

The adrenaline disappears, the red fades from his vision, and all that is left is Sam in a room stinking of blood, both human and phantling, and a filthy sweater on the floor.

"I'm very sorry," Sam says quickly before darting out of the room. He manages to make it to the bathroom before his breathing starts to stutter.

What the fuck is *wrong* with him? He was so determined to find something wrong with the ship, with the family Tommy's found, that he attacked one of his crewmates. He'd wanted so badly to find a reason to save Tommy, to take Tommy with him, to *finally* be able to rescue him when he couldn't before. He stares at his reflection over the sink. His fingers brush the sides of his face where wiry green hair grows, he runs his fingers through his hair and blood comes away on his hands. Shoot, he's probably going to have to get that treated.

A knock comes on the door, quiet and hesitant and Sam practically jumps out of his skin.

"Uh, someone's in here." He says quickly.

"Can I come in?" Tommy asks, sounding uncharacteristically gentle. Never a good sign with Tommy, he wasn't even gentle when Sam came back from experiments drugged out of his mind. Sam opens his mouth, refusal on his tongue, but he swallows it back with a sigh. He can't say no to Tommy, not after just getting him back. Not after what he's just done to his crewmate.

"Sure," Sam mutters, unlocking the door. Tommy steps in, not quite meeting Sam's eyes.

"Are you okay?" Tommy asks.

"Am *I* okay?" Sam repeats with a dry laugh, covering his eyes. "I just attacked your crewmate."

"They're not mad at you," Tommy says, swinging himself up to sit on the counter. Sam gives Tommy a disbelieving look from in between his fingers. Tommy relents, breaking eye contact.

"Fine, *Wilbur* not mad at you," Tommy corrects, rubbing the back of his neck. "The rest of them are pretty pissed."

They sit in silence for a while, Tommy swinging his legs where they hang off of the bathroom sink and Sam doing his best to control his breathing.

"You're bleeding," Tommy says eventually, breaking the silence. Sam hums, fingers brushing the fresh cuts on the back of his head.

"Yeah," He says, frowning. "I can get Ponk to handle it when I get back to my ship."

"I can do it," Tommy says, guiding him to lean over the sink. "I'd say Wilbur could do it but given the circumstances, I don't think he'll be doing much of anything." Sam winces at the joke, and Tommy clears his throat awkwardly before turning on the sink and splashing cold water on Sam's wounds. Sam hisses at the feeling, the recently coagulated blood splitting open again and drawing more blood out to be washed away.

They are silent as Tommy cleans his wounds, pouring hydrogen peroxide- or whatever equivalent they have in space, over the cuts, drawing a hiss of pain from Sam. Tommy does his best to bandage around his hair, and by the time he's done they're both sitting on the bathroom sink, staring at their reflections.

"What do we do now?" Tommy asks, reaching out for Sam's sleeve. Sam lets him take it.

"I need to apologize-" Sam starts, but Tommy shakes his head, cutting him off.

"That's not what I meant," He says grimly, not looking away from his reflection. "I'm not leaving my crew, and you're not leaving yours, I'm assuming."

Sam says nothing. Tommy is right, of course, he can't leave his crew, he needs them and they need him. Tommy nods to himself, like he'd expected Sam's silence.

"When I went back to the ship," Sam says slowly, not able to continue Tommy's line of conversation. "I found a blanket, and- and I knew it was yours, one of the ones the scientists let you keep when you got sick, and it was just... covered in blood."

Tommy says nothing. Sam swallows and stares at his reflection. He doesn't recognize it these days.

"That's how I knew you were dead," Sam says. "How I thought I knew. I took it with me, back to the ship and I put it in a drawer and never looked at it again."

"And the sweater reminded you of that." Tommy finishes. Sam hums his agreement.

"The blanket was in the cockpit when I crashed," Tommy says, leaning his forehead on the cool glass of the mirror and closing his eyes. "I wrapped my hand in it to break through the glass. I think I cut my arm."

They sit there, pressed against the mirror, staring at their reflections. They're both human, Sam not as much anymore, but they are both human. That's more than anything Sam has had since he'd left Tommy. Since he was taken from Tommy.

He looks older, Sam ponders, watching Tommy out of the corner of his eye. He's gained weight, which brushes some of the worry off his shoulders. His hair is longer, dark brown roots growing in. His eyes are tired and weary in a way that a sixteen year old's should never be- or is Tommy seventeen now? Sam never knew his birthday. There is a lightness to his frame that wasn't there before, the tense line in his shoulders softened. Sam knows what group softened it, and he is grateful.

He has some apologies to make.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

no warnings

also sorry ive been far and few between, finals are happening, and some stuff is going on in my personal life. really awesome stuff! but stuff that takes a lot of time

regardless, I'm not stopping until I'm done

Tommy doesn't move from where they sit in the bathroom for a long time, sitting beside each other on the too-smooth alien material of the bathroom sink. They don't speak again until another knock sounds from the other side of the door.

"Come in," They say in unison, voices blending. Bad opens the door a crack, ducking steeply to stop his horns from catching on the doorframe.

"Wilbur's okay," He says softly, aimed at Sam more than at Tommy. Sam's mouth twitches on one side and he runs clawed fingers through his hair.

"That's good," He says, though he sounds far from relieved. "I really messed up, huh Bad?"

The... whatever Sam had called Bad. Amimonium, makes an unsure rumbling sound.

"You... thought you were protecting Tommy," Bad says, tail flicking from side to side. "I don't think anyone can blame you for that. Not after everything."

"They can. They *should*," Sam sighs, winding two strands of green hair together. "They don't know me, I'm just Tommy's weird friend who came on their ship and keeps beating people up." Tommy nods his head sagely, making Sam huff in half-amusement, half-annoyance.

"Well, I definitely don't recommend giving them space," Tommy says. "No pun intended. If you leave them to think on it without apologizing they'll only get more upset and have a harder time forgiving you. Except for Ranboo. I think he'd forgive anyone of anything."

"How am I supposed to make up for this?" Sam groans, sliding down the mirror and lying with his torso on the sink and his legs dangling to the ground.

"I don't know, say your *sorry*?" Tommy drawls, making Sam poke one eye out from where his arm has flopped over his face to glare at the younger human.

"I mean like, what do phantlings do to apologize?"

"You think I know?" Tommy asks, bewildered. "I'm honored that you think so highly of my alien cultural knowledge but I can still barely read Common."

"Should I just do it the human way? Bring him flowers?"

"If you can find flowers in Tubbo's greenhouse that aren't insanely poisonous or eat people, then be my guest."

"You could just... talk to him?" Bad says from the doorway. "Like people."

"Well that'll never work," Sam says, rolling over onto his stomach.

"Yes it will you big bitch," Tommy says, grabbing Sam by the arm and trying to tug him to the door. Sam does his best to go completely limp to stop his pseudo-son from dragging him to the person he had just physically assaulted, but Tommy has been putting on some muscle since Sam last saw him, so he has practically no trouble dragging him off of the counter and out of the bathroom.

Sam stands, probably only to avoid getting his shoulder dislocated, muttering quiet curses at Tommy's newfound strength. Sam is not able to pull himself out of Tommy's grip, nor does he really try to. Maybe Tommy should disappear more often, it seems a lot easier to get his way now that Sam is still getting used to his reappearance. Tommy drags him to the medbay, where he knows his family will be gathered, fretting around Wilbur as the phantling tries to assure them that he's *fine* and everyone is being overdramatic.

Tommy must know his family just as much as he thinks he does, because that is exactly what's going on, though the relatively lighthearted banter dips into icy silence upon the reappearance of Tommy and Sam.

"Sam," Phil says, the warning in his voice strengthened by the aggressive fluffing of his wings, glaring with both his false and real eyes. Sam ducks his head, tilting it to the side in instinctive submission. Phil's wings twitch downwards, but they do not lower completely, still held in defense of his sons. Tommy can see his claws twitching with the urge to snatch Tommy back from Sam's side. He makes no movement to do so, Phil knows just as well as Tommy does that he will return to Sam's side as quickly as he was taken from it.

"I'm here to apologize," Sam says softly, not raising his head, though his eyes do not leave the captain of Tommy's crew. Phil clicks somewhere deep in his throat, a sound Tommy now knows is uncertain, but he does not turn Sam away. No one else speaks and Sam clears his throat awkwardly, unsure of how to continue, seemingly sure he'd be refused before he even got a chance to get a word out. Tommy doesn't think he'd blame them for it, and Sam is one of those self-blaming types anyway. Sam stands to his full height, hands clasping and unclasping at his sides awkwardly.

"My reaction was.. inappropriate. Until a few hours ago, I thought Tommy was dead. I- I shouldn't have attacked you, and I'm sorry. I was scared, but that's not an excuse. I'm an adult and I should have tried to talk things out." The room is silent in response to Sam's apology, and Tommy feels his own secondhand embarrassment begin to curl in his stomach.

"Well, I forgive you," Wilbur says finally. "Sure you got off on a bad foot, but your Tommy's family. Also, you apparently tore off Ponk's arm so I think I got off easy."

Sam lets out a deep shuddering breath as his shoulders relax. Tommy elbows Techno in the side, making the piglin huff in irritation.

"I forgive you as well," Techno says, ducking his head and snuffling. Tommy can see dried blood around his snout and winces internally. That can't be great for Techno's pride. "Though I *am* the security of this ship, if you pull something like that again I'll have no choice but to kick you off, regardless of how you know Tommy."

Tommy frowns, but doesn't argue. He has no choice but to trust that Sam won't attack his crew again. Still, the tension in the room rises and Tommy finally succumbs to the desire to change the subject and get the fuck out of the med bay.

"Where are Tubbo and Ranboo?" Tommy asks, attention finally leaving Sam and falling onto him.

"I think they're showing some of Sam's crew the greenhouse," Phil says. Tommy blinks a couple of times, surprised at Techno's trust in Sam's crew to be alone with the youngest members of their crew. Besides Tommy, of course. Techno seems to notice his surprise and taps at his wrist.

"I didn't leave them alone, I'm not stupid." Techno says, and Tommy sees a screen projecting an image from the greenhouse "I'll be there in a second if they try anything funny."

"Don't bother, I'm gonna head down," Tommy says, waving a hand. "I want to get to know Sam's crew a little better."

Techno grumbles in disapproval, but doesn't move to stop him. Sam follows him as he walks out the door, casting a wary glance at Tommy's crew, who watches them go with suspicious eyes.

As Tommy enters the hallway, he hears Techno's voice, muffled through the wall.

"I don't like this," He says, and Tommy is quick to walk away before he can hear any more. He is going to get his family to trust Sam as much as Tommy does, regardless of any past... tensions.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sam keeps his eyes to the ground as Tommy drags him through the ship by the wrist, not raising his gaze until they reach the greenhouse. When he does look up, his eyes widen in quiet wonder, and Tommy smirks. He remembers his reaction to seeing a room full of greenery after months without. Perhaps greenery is inaccurate, with many of them coming from non-carbon planets, or ones whose atmosphere contains no oxygen, they are a rainbow of colors. Sam steps in, drawn by the inertia of something he's lacked for so long, but just as quickly steps back when he hears voices from beyond the wall of thick leaves and bark.

Tommy has no patience for any more shyness, it's really getting on his last nerve.

"Hey boys!" He bellows. "We're over here!" Sam winces, stepping behind Tommy in a way that he might think is subtle but really isn't at all, and a small crowd comes around the corner, led by Tubbo.

"Hey Tommy," He says, eyes bright before flickering to Sam. "Hi, Sam." He says, his voice a little more cautious. Though he hadn't been in the room when Sam had attacked Wilbur, there is no doubt in Tommy's mind that he knows what happened, that all of them do. Well, Tommy's not going to let that put a damper on him having his sort-of-father-figure back!

"How's the gardening going, Tubbo?" Tommy asks, hoping his tone makes it clear that he doesn't want to talk about what had happened.

"Great!" Tubbo says with the barest of nods, making Tommy's shoulders relax. "I managed to trick one of them into sticking their hands into a snapping plant."

"I'm sure that got plenty of laughs," Tommy grumbles, rubbing at his wrist in memory of where he had fallen victim to the same trick months ago.

"It didn't," Tubbo says, smile only growing wider. "Well- actually, Skeppy laughed." Skeppy makes a noise of agreement, driving a huffing laugh out of Tommy.

"I came here to ask if you guys would be spending the night," Tommy continues, directing his attention to Sam's crew. A few of them startle at being addressed, and there is a pause before anyone speaks.

"We'd have to clear it with Bad," Puffy says, taking a step forward. "But... probably. It's dark and this planet isn't safe to wander at night." Tommy nods, he had been pretty sure that would be the answer, and he's glad for it. He isn't content to leave the two parts of his family in a state of tension just because someone had a bit of an episode.

"Let's go find Bad then," Skeppy says. "He's probably hanging out somewhere moping. You know how he gets when Sam so much as talks about-" The gem-alien is cut off when Ant winds in between his legs with a warning hiss, sending him to the floor.

"You're right," Puffy says, a little too loudly. "Let's go find Bad!"

The small crowd takes off down the halls of the SBI, a few different conversations happening at once within smaller groups. Sam doesn't join in, though when Tommy side-eyes him he's hand-in-hand with the masked alien... was it Ponk? Tommy looks away, a bit awkwardly and resolves not to ask. For now at least.

They find Bad, not moping as Skeppy had guessed, but speaking with Phil, rather nervously if Tommy's shaky understanding of his species body language could be trusted. He is too far away to hear what the pair of captains are saying, but it doesn't matter, because the moment Phil catches sight of the approaching group he stops speaking and walks to catch up with them, Bad tailing behind.

"What were you two gossiping about?" Tommy asks, leaning in for the hug Phil is offering before pulling away so he can be face-to-face with his captain.

"Nothing you need to worry about, mate," Phil says, but Tommy can see in his eyes and in the way that his feathers are laying that he's not upset, so he doesn't push it.

"Bad," Sam says, making Tommy startle at his sudden eagerness to speak. "It's not safe for us to walk back to the Badlands, we need you to clear an overnight stay with the SBI."

"That's what we were talking about," Bad says, tail flicking. "Or- you know, part of it. Phil agrees that it's not safe to return to the Badlands, but for us to stay here we would need to agree to be supervised. Especially after the... incident from earlier." Tommy sees Sam duck his head out of the corner of his eye. "I don't think any of us would disagree."

None of Sam's crew speak up, so Bad nods and turns back to Phil.

"We agree to your terms, Captain."

"Oh don't bother with the formalities," Phil says with a tired smile. "Just call me Phil."

"Wait," Ponk says from where he is glued to Sam's side. "A supervised overnight stay... sounds to me like a sleepover!"

"Uh... yes, you will be sleeping over-" Phil says, eyes a little wider in confusion.

"No, no, no dear Captain," Ponk says, taking a few steps forward so he resides at the front of the group. "I am referring to the incredible human tradition of sleepovers."

"How do you know about sleepovers?" Tommy asks, crossing his arms, hoping that Sam's crew knows enough about human body language to see he's skeptical.

"I have read extensive research about human culture," Ponk says haughtily.

"He reads fanfiction." Sam corrects with a smile. Ponk screeches something high-pitched and offended, probably a curse in his own tongue, and Tommy can't help but laugh.

When everything is set up, it kind of does remind Tommy of home. Upon Ponk's assistance, and some help with accuracy from Tommy and Sam, they set it up like a classic sleepover party. Tommy is cackling as Ranboo gets in the way of Tubbo's attempts to build a blanket fort from the throne he's constructed, all made of pillows. There are blankets scattered in piles, making a cluster of nests. Phil lays with his limbs and wings stretched across several of them, looking like he's in bird heaven.

"Should we watch a movie?" Ranboo asks from where his head pokes out of the sagging blanket fort.

"Oh, fuck yes," Ponk says excitedly, ignoring the quiet admonishment from Bad. "I know this great one about a human disgusted as a regular high-schooler, and then the main character falls in love with them and-" Sam puts a hand over his mouth with a roll of his eyes.

"God no, we are not watching space-Twilight."

"You don't know how to have fun," Tommy says with a smile, more to irritate Sam than

anything. Ponk ducks away from Sam's hand, Tommy can't see his face but he assumes he must be smiling at Tommy. Or whatever his species' equivalent to smiling is.

"See, Tommy knows good film when he sees it."

"He hasn't even seen it!" Sam argues. "He just wants to disagree with me!"

"Space-Twilight!" Tubbo repeats though Tommy knows he has no idea what it means. A few others join in, and then the whole room is chanting for space-Twilight, and Sam caves with a sigh.

"Space-Twilight sucks," Tommy says about ten minutes into the movie. The main character is in their school's library, which is weird to think about, schools in space, researching humans for some sort of project. The drawings of humans in the movie are inaccurate at best and offensive at worst.

"You suck," Ponk says distantly, not taking his eyes off the screen. Sam nudges Tommy's side with his elbow, and Tommy ignores the twinge of pain that he feels at the touch.

"He's seen this movie like a thousand times," Sam says. "He picks it every time he has a movie night."

"So, are you two like... together?" Tommy asks in a whisper, not wanting to disrupt the people actually watching the movie. Sam sputters something unintelligible and Tommy is quick to explain. "I mean- I'm not homophobic or anything. I love gay people!" Tommy may have said that last part a little too loudly, because he gets a few odd stares from people not already used to his antics.

"Uh... yes. Sort of. We haven't discussed it much because of- you know. Being space pirates eats up a lot of time, but yeah."

"Good for you, Sam," Tommy says, and he's surprised to find that he means it. No kernel of bitterness threatens to choke him on his words. "You deserve good things." Sam smiles and turns back to the movie, currently displaying a bunch of jarring bloom effects over poorly rendered pictures of humans.

When the credits roll, more than half of them are asleep. Tommy gets up and throws blankets over those that don't already have them, sighing in relief when he sees that Wilbur had joined them sometime during the movie, and is asleep at the back of the group. He's at least comfortable enough to be asleep near Sam, so hopefully, any hard feelings can still be smoothed over.

Once Tommy has completed his mission to keep everyone warm, he returns to his spot next to Tubbo and Ranboo's pillow fort, which he had declined the invitation into. He's not the biggest fan of small spaces after everything. He pulls the blanket up to his chin and curls into himself, listening to the soft music of the credits. He feels a twinge of discomfort, the feeling that something is wrong, now that he is laying down in the quiet and has no choice but to examine the content of his body.

His stomach kind of hurts.

Chapter End Notes

Ponk likes humans how teenagers in 2010 liked vampires. That is all

Anyway I don't usually do shoutouts these days but I wanna give kudos heyhaycosplay on tik tok they have been doing human error cosplay and it's fuckin awesome! Go check them out

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

warnings
/minor violence

Chapter Notes

tommy; omg ive learned my lesson ill tell people when I'm sick
ranboo: i am freaking the fuck out
tommy: I've forgotten the lesson

Tommy can't sleep.

The pain isn't *bad* . It's barely even there. It's probably just healing funny. He wants *so* badly for it to be nothing, for it to be stress or a weird piece of food, for him not to go back into the medbay. Still, he isn't stupid. He should tell someone. He *has* to tell someone. Sam is back in his life now, and he's not going to make the older man suffer through his death a second time. Not that he's dying, because he's not. It's fine.

But if it isn't fine, then...

Tommy sighs and resolves to tell Phil. He rolls over to wake him, reaching out a hand for his captain. When he opens his eyes, though, he's face to face with Ranboo. Tommy startles, jolting backward. The enderian's eyes are wide open, but that's not unusual, as he doesn't have eyelids in a traditional sense. What is unusual is the glazed-over expression on his face, and the way that he is climbing out of the pillow fort seemingly mindlessly.

Tommy has had experience with sleepwalking, and he still does- occasionally, although the worst of it has passed through months of work. Tommy is *pretty* sure Ranboo is sleepwalking which... isn't something he thought enderians were able to *do* . His second thought is that

something might be wrong with Ranboo, since he's never done something like this before. Ranboo escapes from the confines of the pillow fort and starts to walk towards the hull. Tommy makes a startled noise in the back of his throat and rushes after Ranboo, falling forward a bit before he can kick off the blankets tangling his legs. He grabs Ranboo's wrist, trying to pull him back to the fort without waking him up. Ranboo's glinting eyes widen and Tommy barely has time to leap back when Ranboo is slashing at him, claws outstretched. Tommy yelps in surprise, waking most of the crew. Ranboo lunges for him again, and then Sam is in between them, gritting his teeth as he raises an arm to block Ranboo's attack.

"What are you doing-" Sam barks, but Tommy is quick to interrupt him before another fight breaks out.

"Sam, don't hurt him!" Tommy shouts, waking those who were still clinging to the last dregs of sleep. "Something's wrong! I think he's sleepwalking or fucking- possessed or something! I don't know!."

Sam's face changes from rage to concern, and he ducks behind the enderian, wrapping his arms over his shoulders and restraining him. Ranboo hisses and spits all the while. Tubbo comes up behind Tommy, still sleep-tousled and confused.

"He *can't* be sleepwalking," Tubbo says, eyes wild. "That doesn't happen to enderians."

"Well it's happening now," Tommy says, rushing to assist Sam when it looks like he's struggling to restrain Ranboo on his own. Tommy grabs Ranboo's wrists and pins them together to stop him from slashing at Sam's face.

The two crews crowd around Ranboo as he thrashes and shrieks, all speaking over each other in panic.

"Wake him up!" Someone shouts.

"How the fuck should we do that?" Someone else snaps back.

"Language!" Someone barks, and Tommy doesn't have to guess who that voice belongs to.

"Try splashing water on him!" Skeppy shouts, met with a unanimous '*No!*' from every member of the SBI.

"Let me go !" Ranboo screams, voice interspersed with crackling and chirps. "I need to see it!"

"See what?" Tubbo shouts over the enderian's screams. Ranboo doesn't respond beyond a crackling snarl, lunging forward to snap at Tubbo. Tommy and Sam yank him back, their combined strength barely enough to contain the writhing enderian.

Tommy's grip slips, and Ranboo wrenches out of their grasp. Tommy yelps when Ranboo rounds on him, teeth bared, but the enderian doesn't have a chance to attack before Sam is tackling him to the ground. Ranboo's head bounces against the ground, thankfully cushioned by a blanket, and he gasps in pain and goes still. For a moment, Tommy fears the worst and a cold swooping feeling grows in his stomach, but then he sees the stuttering rise and fall of Ranboo's chest and he lets out a breath in relief.

"What the fuck." Tubbo says, hands trembling where they are clenched at his sides. "What the fuck."

"I don't know," Tommy gasps. "Should we like- wake him up or something?"

Apparently, there is no need to, because Ranboo twitches and begins to sit up, and Tommy is immediately at his side, helping him into a sitting position.

"What happened?" The enderian groans, voice hoarse from his screaming.

"You were sleepwalking," Sam says, kneeling on Ranboo's other side.

"I don't- what?" Ranboo sputters, eyes still bleary like he had just woken up. Which- Tommy reasons, he sort of had. "That shouldn't- that doesn't happen."

The room is silent.

"Not to rush things along," Sam says, gripping his arm and wincing. "But if I could get this checked out? I'd prefer not to have an infection if I can help it."

"Sure, of course," Phil says, eyes shifting from Sam to Tommy to Ranboo distractedly. Ponk pulls Sam's hand away from where it's covering the wound and makes a whistling sound, which like- they should not be able to do that through the mask but whatever.

"You really managed to get scraped up there Sammy," Ponk says, making Ranboo startle from where he sits.

"Did I... Did *I* do that?" Ranboo breathes. Tommy winces, but Ranboo must take the fact that everyone suddenly seems to be very interested in the floor as confirmation, because he lets out a choked sound of horror and scrambles out of the room. Tommy sets off after him, but is stopped by a hand on his wrist. It's Sam, staring at him with concern.

"He could still be dangerous-"

"He's not," Tommy rushes out. "He isn't, but he's upset and he's my *friend* ." Sam looks a little pained, but lets him go with a whisper telling him to stay safe. Tommy only takes the time to nod before rushing after his friend.

"We'll meet you back in the medbay!" Phil calls after him. Tommy doesn't waste any time letting them know he heard, they know he did.

If there is one person on this ship that is difficult to find, it's Ranboo. With the ability to teleport and his stupidly long legs, if he wants to avoid someone, they're not going to find him.

Tommy has checked in all the enderian's usual hiding spots, all of which were empty. There's one last place he can think of, but the thought of Ranboo being there turns his stomach.

He stands at the entrance to a short hallway, lined with cells. It's dark, the only light coming from the door. Tommy obstructs most of it, his shadow stretching across the floor. Tommy walks forward, to the last cell in the row, to the one most lived in. His stomach swoops unpleasantly as he gets closer, and the fuzzy frightened feeling in his brain that is telling him to run is getting stronger, but he is more than his instincts. He doesn't run, not when Ranboo could be here, upset and scared.

He stands in the doorway of his cell. His and Ranboo's, now. He chews the inside of his lip at the familiar dusty smell and steps inside.

Ranboo is there, of course, sitting in the corner, curled into himself like he's trying to disappear into the darkness. Maybe he is. Tommy sits next to him, Ranboo doesn't move away, which he counts as a victory.

"No one's mad at you, boob boy." Tommy tries, joke falling flat in the thin air of the cell.

"They should be," Ranboo whispers from where he's curled into himself. "I hurt Sam, I can't remember if I hurt anyone else."

"You didn't," Tommy assures, choosing to leave out all the attempts Ranboo had made to maim his crewmates.

"But why can't I *remember* !" Ranboo cries, head snapping up, hands curling and uncurling desperately. "This doesn't- haven't I had *enough*?"

"I-"

"It's so *typical* for me to mess everything up again," Ranboo says, voice becoming more filled with static as he gets more emotional. "This has to be another one of the Void's punishments, to lose control, to be too dangerous to stay around my haunting, I'm a burden, I'm a *monster* -"

Tommy hugs him.

Ranboo goes silent, hands dropping to wrap around Tommy's back.

They sit like that in silence for a while. Eventually, Ranboo speaks.

"I'm scared." He whispers.

"I know," Tommy whispers back.

"I think I'm cursed."

"You're not," Tommy assures. "We're going to go back to the others, you don't need to be here."

"If something like... *that* happens again you should lock me up," Ranboo says, tapping his claws together in upset. "I should sleep here. It's safer for you-"

"You are not sleeping in a jail cell because of an *accident* ." Tommy snaps. "We are going to see the others. You are not a monster, and you're not cursed, you're Ranboo. And you're *good*."

Ranboo goes silent, and Tommy takes the opportunity to drag the enderian out of the cell door and back to the main body of the ship. They both breathe a little easier once they're out of the dust-filled air.

When they return to the medbay, it's not the chaos Tommy expected, Wilbur and Ponk are working together to bandage Sam, which is a relief to Tommy, although Technoblade still watches the older human with a death glare. People are scattered about, a few have dragged blankets and pillows out of the main room and have gone back to sleep, but most are on their feet, conversing with each other in hushed tones.

The noise all stops when Ranboo and Tommy enter the room. The enderian immediately stiffens under the attention, making a fearful warbling sound.

"Good, Tommy found you." Phil says, wings opening slightly in welcome. "I was worried." Ranboo relaxes a little, but Tommy can still see confusion in his mismatched eyes. He's ready to defend his friend if he needs to.

"No one's mad," Tubbo says, repeating the sentiment Tommy had shared in the cell. "We were worried when you left. It wasn't your fault."

"Now let's go have hot chocolate," Wilbur says, patting Ranboo on the shoulder. Well, he tries too, but enderians are very tall, so he really pats his upper arm. Tommy perks up at the prospect of a hot drink, it may help soothe his throat, and he follows the crowd to the kitchen, not before correcting Wilbur's word choice.

"You mean not-chocolate-hot-chocolate?"

Tommy stares down at his cup.

The not-chocolate-hot-chocolate has long since gone cold and he just... can't bring himself to drink it. While he usually would jump at the opportunity to get a taste of home, the idea of actually drinking from it nearly makes him gag. He sets the mug down and climbs into one of the blanket piles, sharing one with Tubbo and Ranboo.

When he lays down, he can see that Ranboo's not asleep. His eyes aren't closed, which, you know, is not really a great indicator, but there is awareness in his eyes that is too sharp to be sleep.

"Aren't you tired," Tommy asks, voice a bit hoarse.

"No," Ranboo whispers, careful not to wake the others. "I don't want to... do anything bad again." Tommy wants to argue with him, to convince him that he can sleep and feel safe but... he's tired, all the way down in his bones. It's weighing his eyelids down, and even the discomfort in his chest and stomach can't stop him from drifting off.

Wait, no. He can't sleep yet. He needed to tell someone... something. Tommy just... can't remember what it was.

Oh well, he'll just tell them when he wakes up.

Phil wakes up to the darkness of the main hall, staring at the ceiling. He takes a few seconds to wonder what had woken him, and then he sees it. A red glow, painting his face and robes. He snaps into a sitting position and grabs the gem hung around his neck.

It's hot to the touch.

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

warnings
-general terror

Sam wakes up to Phil shaking him roughly and is immediately on high alert.

"What's wrong?" He slurs, sitting up so fast that he nearly knocks heads with Tommy's captain.

"It's Tommy- something's wrong," Phil says, voice panicked and hushed, trying not to wake the others. Sam has no such qualms, not even waiting for Phil to explain before he is scrambling over multiple sleeping bodies to get to Tommy.

The first thing Sam notices is that Tommy is still. He is almost never still, even in his sleep. He will twitch and mutter and thrash, but he isn't doing any of that now. The second thing he notices is that he has a splotchy redness over his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. Sam puts the back of his hand to his forehead, more out of habit than anything else, and winces at the heat that radiates from him. Definitely a fever, and a pretty bad one at that. Sam shakes him, he needs to wake him to see how bad it is, but he doesn't move. Sam ignores the cold pang of terror in his stomach that nearly brings up the not-chocolate-hot-chocolate he had been drinking. He shakes him again, not getting so much as a twitch of his eyelids. People are waking up now, Tommy's friends trying to get to him, held back by Techno, which Sam is grateful for. As good as their intentions may be, having two terrified teenagers underfoot is not going to help Tommy. Sam's hand moves to Tommy's wrist, fingers shaking over the pulse. Sam holds his breath, not able to tell if it is his own terrified heartbeat under his fingers or his kid's. After a few terrifying seconds, Sam feels a second heartbeat racing alongside his, it's way too fast for someone unconscious, but it's there, and Sam all but collapses on top of Tommy.

His crew must take that as an act of grief, because they are all immediately shouting over each other, terrified.

"He's alive!" Sam barks, holding up a hand to silence the yelling. He lifts Tommy into a bridal hold. He may not be a captain here, but until Tommy is back on his feet, he will be giving the orders. "But-" Sam takes a shaky breath in and tries to strip away all his emotions

and see the situation for what it is. He may not be fighting, but he can be the Warden if that's what this requires. "But he's going to die if we don't figure out what's wrong."

"We're going to the medbay," Phil commands, and Sam nods, taking off as fast as he can go without dropping Tommy's limp form. Only a few of Tommy's crew are able to keep up, but it doesn't matter, they can meet him there. The most important thing is getting Tommy to the medbay.

Sam runs through the halls, dodging the occasional box that has been left sitting in the way, not bothering to give his eyes time to adjust. Wilbur comes up behind him, panting, and grabs his shoulder.

"Infection," Wilbur gasps beside him, and Sam slows so the phantling has an easier time running alongside him.

"What?" Sam snaps, clutching Tommy closer to his chest.

"The surgery, he needs stronger antibiotics."

"Fuck!" Sam spits. He's not usually one to swear, but he thinks the moment calls for it.

"We already have them," Wilbur is quick to explain. "They're in storage."

"Why haven't you used them?" Sam hisses, rage beginning to bubble up.

"We got a little distracted that Tommy's dead father was back to life!" Wilbur snaps. Before Sam can respond, and maybe inform Wilbur that he isn't Tommy's dad, the ship jolts and Sam is thrown to the floor, rolling onto his back to keep Tommy from getting hurt.

He looks down the hallway to see most of their crews disoriented, a few getting back to their feet. Sam joins them, breath shaking. Something is wrong.

"What's happ-" Is all he gets out before the lights go dark. Sam freezes, backing up to the wall instinctively to cover his back. Emergency lights blink to life overhead, bathing the crew in red light. One of them is flickering, but when Sam tries to find the source, it's coming from Phil's necklace.

Tommy's captain looks pained, holding the gem and looking at Sam.

"Something's wrong," He says, and yeah. Sam had guessed that by now. "Take Tommy and hide. Don't go to the medbay, he has a setup in the vents, you'll find it. Go!"

Sam wastes no time in following orders, not if it means keeping Tommy safe. He has a feeling he knows what's happening to the ship, and if he's right then being caught would be

worse than death.

Tommy can't fight back right now, but Sam can. He will not fail Tommy again. He takes off in a dead sprint, slinging Tommy over his shoulder so he has at least one arm free to fight with if he has to. It's hard to find in the dim red light, but he finds a grate eventually, just above the floor, and he ducks down and rips it out of the wall. There's no time to fuss with screws, not when there could be poachers on the ship.

The ship rocks again and Sam's head slams into the wall, he bites back a yelp of pain before it can leave his mouth. He can't risk making any noise right now. Not when he doesn't know where the threat is, not when Tommy is relying on him.

He slides into the vents, thankfully roomy enough that he doesn't feel insanely claustrophobic when he's in there. He knows Tommy would be if he was awake, he was always complaining about his claustrophobia when he was back on Dream's ship. Sam frowns at the thought of him living in these cold metal tunnels, that he was alone. That Sam had let him be alone.

He shakes his head- or at least as much as he can in the metal confines of the vents. He needs to focus on hiding Tommy and figuring out what's going on, he can't waste time with self-pity, not when Tommy needs him. Not when his crew needs him.

It takes eight minutes to reach the spot where all the vents converge, Sam had been counting in his head, the unavoidable progression of time helping soothe the panic that is settling in his bones. Knowing that his crew- his family is more at risk with every second that ticks by is a fact he does his best to ignore.

At the end of the tunnel, there is a round-ish room. There are low ceilings that mean Sam isn't able to stand up, pillows piled in the corner, along with a few papers, a bit yellowed. Everything in the room is covered in dust, but it's safe here. For now.

Sam crawls over to the corner, shaking the dust off the blankets and sets Tommy in the pile of pillows before covering him. He stares at Tommy's flushed face for a few seconds before

taking the blanket away, he doesn't want to make the fever worse, after all. Tommy shudders in his sleep and Sam caves, putting the blanket over his legs as a compromise.

He hopes Tommy doesn't wake up before Sam gets back, he doesn't want him to be alone in a small space ever again. Sam would love to stay here, to sneak into the medbay and grab whatever medicine he needs and nurse Tommy back to health by himself, to absolve himself of all the times he had failed.

But that's not what Tommy needs. Sam takes a moment to grab a map of the vents that Tommy had drawn who-knows how long ago and finds the tunnel that will take him to the main body of the ship. Tommy needs his crew, the family he's found when Sam wasn't there for him. Whoever is on this ship now, and Sam is sure it's a break-in now. If it hadn't been then one of Sam's crew would have called him and told him it was fine, it was just an issue with the generator. No one has called, and the lights are not back on.

It takes less time to crawl through the vents now, not maneuvering Tommy through them too. It takes three minutes to get back to the main body. It has been thirteen minutes since the ship had been invaded, and Sam is afraid. Not for himself, but he is afraid that his family is dead or dying, he's scared that his kid is dying. He's terrified, his hands are shaking. It has been fourteen minutes, and Sam will waste no more time.

Red light shines through the slats in the vent, painting bloody stripes across Sam's face. He stares down at Tommy's crew sitting alongside his, all of them tied up, but alive. There is a group of aliens, the name of the species he doesn't care to know the name of, standing guard. One is messing with a panel on the wall, trying to get into the cockpit, trying to steal the ship. Another has a gun pointed at Phil, asking him questions that Sam is too far away to hear.

Sam doesn't make a habit of showing his face, even in the pit he avoids it. It's dangerous to show your face as a human, a stupid idea this deep in space. He never ever shows his face to strangers. He thinks he can make an exception just this once.

It's not like they're going to be able to tell anyone what they saw.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

i reccomend that you dont read this chapter if you're sensitive to gore.

to skip heavy gore stop reading after: "He sticks his fingers through the slats and squeezes until the metal snaps with a terrible groan." and begin after: "He ignores the clamoring, the people trying to speak to him"

cw: blood, gore, murder, guns

Sam is waiting.

They still have their guns trained on Tommy's captain, and running in now would be a death sentence for the elytrian. Sam swallows, careful to keep his breathing silent. He doesn't know how good the invaders' hearing is, after all. One of the invaders says something, pushing the gun closer to Phil's head, and Techno snarls, straining against his bonds. The gun turns to him, and Sam takes in a sharp breath, rubbing his calloused fingers together anxiously. The gunman shakes his weapon in the piglin's face, shouting something, and Sam can wait no longer.

He whistles, low and mournful, the way birds back home used to. He almost laughs, using Earth hunting tactics out in space. Hopefully they'll work the same. The gunman stiffens, turning around, though his gun is still trained on Techno. The other invaders are equally still, staring up at the ceiling nervously. None of them look to Sam's grate.

"Animal," He hears one of them grunt, and Sam knows it's time. They're nervous now, they'll be quicker to shoot, he needs to get the guns trained on him. He'll have a better chance of survival, after all, especially if they aren't using bullets, which- well, they probably aren't. Most of the species Sam has met use energy guns. Sam whistles again, longer now, and slams his fist against the thin metal wall beside him. It wobbles, the sound echoing out through the hallway. The invaders are distracted now, and Sam takes the opportunity to check his pockets for anything he can use. If he had stashed a weapon on himself and forgot then this fight is going to be a lot easier.

He finds no weapons, and nothing in his pockets besides a few pieces of scrap from his tinkering. He finds a bolt and rolls it in his fingers, thinking. He pushes the piece of metal out

of the vent grate and watches as it hits the floor. The gunmen jump, and one steps closer to investigate, but none of the guns go off. Sam swallows a sigh of relief. For this to work, they can't see that he's sentient, if they do, then they'll know they can hold the others over his head, and then the ship will be lost. Sam thinks of Tommy, unconscious in the walls and knows that the risk is too great. He cannot fail.

He sticks his fingers through the slats and squeezes until the metal snaps with a terrible groan. He hears shouts of alarm from the invaders, but pays them no heed, dropping the twisted metal to the floor, where it hits with a clang that has one of the gunmen covering their ears.

"Show yourself!" One of them shrieks, pointing the gun at Sam. He is not afraid. He pulls himself out of the vent and drops to the floor. The vent comes out at the ceiling, so it's a bit of a drop, but Sam manages not to roll his ankle, landing in a crouch in front of the invaders.

"We've already got your crew, we'll kill-"

Sam stretches up to his full height, unfolding his limbs in a way he knows is unsettling to aliens. Sure enough, the gunman threatening him steps back, mouth opening.

In the dim red glow of the emergency lights, Sam stands, unmistakably human. The gunman, the one who had been threatening Phil, who had tied up Sam's family and was the reason Tommy was not getting medical attention right now, screams an alert to his team. Sam lunges, spurred by the noise.

"Huma-" Is what the gunman gets out, and then Sam's hands are around his throat, and they are both on the ground. The other invaders are scattering, but Sam doesn't care. He will catch them. Sam is squeezing, but the invader's species must have a reinforced windpipe, because he's still breathing, reaching for the gun that was knocked from his hands by Sam's attack. Something bashes into his temple, and Sam sucks in a pained breath, head spinning as he tries to make sense of what hit him. He looks down at the gunman pinned under him, holding his gun by the barrel.

"Did you just *pistol whip* me?" Sam hisses in English. He wastes no more time, if choking won't kill them, then he will have to settle for a messier way of doing things. He sends up a quick prayer that the minors of the crew aren't looking and sinks his teeth into the alien's neck.

He hopes that the neck is a weak spot for this species, but pretty much every creature Sam has encountered has had a target on their neck, including on Earth. As foul-tasting blood spurts across Sam's tongue, he thinks he got it right. There is a gurgling sound next to his ear, in the gunman's chest, rising to his throat, where it becomes more liquid than air.

He bites down harder, shaking his head like he had seen dogs do to prey, something gives under his teeth, and then the alien's body is on the floor, throat open and bleeding. The missing flesh is still in Sam's mouth. Sam can feel disgusted with himself later, but right now the people he loves need him. He spits out the chunk of flesh in his mouth and gets to his feet. He wants to untie his crew, but there's no time. He can't let the other invaders leave. Can't let them tell anyone what they saw, not on this planet. Not here.

The one messing with the control panel is still there, much more frantic now as she tries to pull the door open. Sam takes a step towards her and she whips her gun towards the crew.

"Don't move!" She screams, eyes locked onto the dead gunman behind Sam. "I'll shoot them."

Sam does not hesitate. Right now, humans are animals. He is an *animal* . If this was a test, it was a poor one.

Sam lunges, slamming the invader into the wall, shoulder pressing against her head, making a disgusting cracking sound against the wall, a bang that Sam doesn't know the source of sounds off, but no one sounds like they're in pain, so he ignores it. She falls to the floor, her eyes closed and a stripe of blood running down her face, but Sam can't be sure that she's dead. He lifts his boot, thankful he had managed to find waterproof material this deep in space. Sam's vision reds out a little, but there is a crunch and a wetness seeping into the seams of his boots. Hmm, perhaps not quite waterproof.

The final invader is running, almost to the door. Sam is not worried, he grabs the gun from the dead alien's limp hand and takes careful aim at the runner's leg. They go down. Sam is reminded of how the other kids hunted deer back home. He usually doesn't kill runners, Sam ponders as he walks evenly towards the final invader, leaving one bloody footprint behind him. But the runner could tell people what he had seen.

Sam plants his boot on the alien's shoulder, leaving a streak of deep black blood on the alien's flight jacket. They are cowering beneath him, screaming for his team. Sam will try to make it quick. He points the gun in between the alien's eyes.

And then there is no one left to hurt. He's done what he needed to do, he is not human. Not really.

He walks to Bad and unties the ropes that bind him, not speaking. He ignores the clamoring, the people trying to speak to him, and returns to the vents, mind blank. He needs to get Tommy, and then he can lay down. He just needs to get Tommy, and then it will have been worth it. It'll have been okay, and he won't feel this way anymore.

Sam doesn't count the seconds this time, he just arrives in the round room in what seemed like a blink of an eye. Sam consults the map and finds which tunnel will lead to the medbay. He shuffles to the corner where Tommy is still sleeping, feverish, but breathing, blessedly alive. Sam has a slightly hysterical moment where he wants nothing more than to lay down beside Tommy and go to sleep, not caring about how worried the others may be. Not caring about the danger they are still in.

That's not what Tommy needs, though. Sam has failed him too many times. Sam wipes the hair clinging to Tommy's forehead away, leaving behind a streak of blood, colors mixing. Sam sucks in a sharp breath and wipes the mess off with his sleeve. It does nothing but smear it more. Sam gives up with a sigh, he should focus on getting Tommy to the medbay. He lifts the boy to his chest and begins the army crawl to the medbay.

Time once again moves strangely, his brain replaying what he had done again and again. He killed those people, and he *had* to, but still. The smell and the acrid taste of alien blood lays in his brain like a thick fog, something Sam thinks he will never be able to fully wash away.

The vent exit to the medbay is near the floor, thankfully, so Sam shoves Tommy out of the grate and then follows him, immediately surrounded by his crew.

"Get Tommy," He breathes. he doesn't want to talk. Ponk understands, helping him to his feet before freezing beside him.

"Sam," They say, voice a little too high to be casual. "How are you doing there buddy?"

"Good," Sam grunts, wanting nothing for than to lay down.

"Okay, because there's kind of a lot of blood on you."

"Not mine," Sam assures his fiance, patting his head in what he hopes is a reassuring manner.

"I'm pretty sure only humans bleed red though," Ponk insists, and Sam takes a second to look down at himself. Sure enough, ruby-red blood glints in the returned light of the medbay. For a second, he panics, thinking it's Tommy's, but then his hand goes to his side, and an agonizing jolt of pain races through him.

"Oh," Sam says dumbly. "I got shot."

"You are the stupidest human I've ever met," Ponk growls, steering Sam to a gurney. "Now stay alive so Tommy can see you when he wakes up. He's gonna be pissed at me if I let you kick the bucket." Sam smiles at Ponk's use of human phrases, it always made him feel at home.

"It's a flesh wound," He assures Ponk, patting his hand and leaving behind a red streak of blood. "I'll be fine."

"You'd better be," Ponk grumbles, and that's the last thing Sam hears before the darkness that has been crowding the edge of his vision reaches the center, pulling him down into a dreamless sleep.

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

cw: vomiting, aftermath of violence, panic attacks, disassociation, needles (iv being pulled out)

Sam wakes up to fog. People are speaking, but it isn't English, and he can't bring himself to translate the words into something familiar. Something that makes sense to him. Someone puts their hands on his back and helps him sit up, and then he sees Ponk. They look worried beyond the mask they wear, speaking quietly. Sam can't listen to him, can't hear the meaning in his words. He is a murderer. He is a murderer. He is a murderer.

Something floods his mouth, coppery and slick, and he shoves his fiancée aside to throw up in the sink that is embedded in a nearby counter. Through his double vision, he sees the rusty orange color of his vomit, and wretches again when he recognizes the gunman's blood. He lays his head on the counter and sobs, gritting his bloody teeth against the pain of what he's done. There are hands on him, and he doesn't want anyone to touch him, but Sam is too exhausted to bat them away. The hands pull him to a bed, and then Sam is staring at the ceiling again, unblinking, unmoving.

He has a few minutes of peace, his brain blank and his vision blotted out with a dark blue spot from staring at the lights, and then the ringing in his ears fades and he begins to hear the meaning of the words around him.

"-was throwing up too. If he's caught it you'll need to perform surgery." Someone is saying quietly. Sam jolts up, arms raising to defend himself.

"No." He slurs. It occurs to him that they may be talking about Tommy, and knows he has to get to him. When he manages to escape from the bed, his legs give out from under him immediately, and he smacks his face on the floor. He gets his arms underneath him with more than the usual amount of difficulty and starts to drag himself in a random direction. He doesn't know where Tommy is, but he'll find him. He'll protect him.

Someone is lifting him up, coarse fur pressing against his back and laying him back in the bed. Sam does his best to fight back, but his hands are shaking, and then all of a sudden he's

sobbing and he can't stop. Techno- and apparently it was Techno that had picked him up, steps back, looking around for help. Ponk steps forward putting a hand on his back.

"Hey, it's ok Sammy." He soothes, looking worried, which only makes Sam sob harder. "We're not gonna do anything. The bad guys are gone." Ponk presses a cloth to his face, which is quickly being soaked through with blood, because apparently he had smashed his face in while he fell, which is just great. Sam can't speak. He wants to reassure everyone that he's fine, that he's good. He's not. He isn't. He's a murderer. If he opens his mouth he's sure he'll throw up again. He has to know that Tommy's okay. If he isn't, then all of this would have been for nothing.

"Tommy." Is all he gets out, more a whimper than a word, but Ponk understands.

"He's okay," Ponk assures. "His surgery wound got infected, we've got him on antibiotics now, he'll be fine in a few days." Sam breathes out, falling back against the pillow that had been shoved beneath his head. He doesn't want to think. He doesn't want to exist for a little while. To live with the reality of what he'd done. There is blood under his nails, though the rest of him has been scrubbed clean, but they couldn't get rid of all the evidence. The tendons stuck in his teeth, the blood wedged under his nails that is sure to take root and rot. He raises his shaking arms to his face to cover his eyes, taking in sharp, terrified breaths.

"Sam you've gotta tell us what's wrong-"

"I killed them," Sam bites out, voice thick, nails digging into his face. "I killed those people."

"You saved us," Ponk argues, but he doesn't *get* it. He's not a monster. Sam doesn't bother trying to explain. He rolls onto the side that isn't covered in stiff bandages and pulls the blankets up to his chin. Hopefully, he'll be able to sleep without nightmares, but the chances of that are slim. He falls asleep again to the sound of Ponk trying to get him to speak, to act normal.

Sam doesn't think he'll ever be normal again.

Tommy doesn't feel very good, but it's a big step up from when he fell asleep, so that's good. He actually... doesn't know where he is, but he's pretty sure his crew is in too deep to sell him out at this point, so he's not too worried about it.

Sure enough, when he opens his eyes he sees the now-familiar ceiling of the med bay, his crew gathered around him. He sits up a little, scooting up onto his elbows, and catches sight of Sam lying in the medical bed across from him, curled onto his side with his crew surrounding him, a perfect mirror of Tommy. His heart drops into his stomach, and in less than a second he is on his feet, ignoring the cry of shock from the people at his bedside.

There is a tug in his arm and then a sharp sting of pain as he yanks out the IV, but it doesn't matter, he needs to make sure Sam's okay. Tommy only just got him back, he can't lose him again. He can't. He *won't*. He is shoving aside Sam's crewmates and clasping the older human's hands in his.

"Is he alive?" Comes rushing out of his mouth without his permission. He doesn't know what he'll do if they say no.

"He's fine, Tommy," Bad says, putting a hand on his shoulder that Tommy only feels a little bad about shrugging off.

"What *happened*?" Tommy hisses, scanning Sam for any injuries. His head and side are coated in thick white bandages but it doesn't look like anything that would leave him in the medbay, not unconscious, not surrounded by his worried crew.

"A team of people came in the ship," Tubbo says from behind him, making him jump. "They wanted to break into the cockpit and fly it off-planet."

"And they hurt him?" Tommy finishes. Tubbo makes a strange face.

"...Yes." He says after a pause. "But I don't think that's why he's down." Tommy looks down at Sam's face again, brows furrowing when he sees his eyes are open. Wide and glassy, his teeth clenched and his hands trembling where they lay crossed over his chest.

"Go away," Tommy says, shooing away the crowd. They don't move, and a rush of irritation rises in him. "Go!" He barks, turning around to glare at them. Finally, they leave and Tommy is able to shove Sam off to the side and climb into the hospital bed with him.

"Are you okay?" Tommy asks, squeezing the older human's hands. Sam takes a shaky breath and shuts his eyes.

"I killed them," He whispers, hands coming up to cover his face. Tommy lets him. "I killed them."

"They would have killed you," Tommy tries, voice weak. Sam shakes his head.

"Tommy... I'm not even human anymore." Sam says, voice shaking.

"You are-"

"I ripped out one of their throats," Sam says, silencing Tommy. "With my teeth."

Tommy says nothing. Sam swallows, rubbing his throat.

"Whatever they did to me... it's turning me into a monster." Sam breathes. "What if I hurt someone I care about."

"You won't," Tommy assures. Sam opens his mouth to argue, but Tommy holds up his hand to stop him. "You *won't*. You didn't kill Wilbur, even when you were mad at him. His species is delicate, you were pulling your punches and you know it. You killed those people because they would kill you, kill all of us. You did it to *protect* us, and I know you'd never kill someone unless you had to."

"But I still did," Sam whispers.

"Yeah," Tommy agrees, rolling onto his back. "You did. That's going to have to be something you learn to live with, but it doesn't make you a monster. It doesn't make you less human."

"It-"

"If it were me?" Tommy asks, still looking at the ceiling. "If it were me who got taken away for genetic experiments would you be saying the same thing? Would I be a monster?"

"...No," Sam admits, joining Tommy's ceiling-watching vigil. "You wouldn't be."

"You're as human as you ever were, Sam." Tommy sighs. "It's not the same situation, but I know how you feel. I've been feeling less and less human the longer I stay away from Earth."

"It's weird isn't it?" Sam says, frowning. "Losing everything?"

"Yeah," Tommy huffs in a laugh that has no mirth behind it. "That's one way to put it."

"I want to be grateful, you know, that the Badlands found me and all, but God. *God*, I miss my old life. I missed you."

"I missed you too," Tommy says, squeezing Sam's hand. "I'm glad I met you."

"I'm glad I met you too, Tommy," Sam says, eyes crunching up in a smile. "You fallin' asleep?"

"No," Tommy says, eyes drooping.

"You can sleep," Sam says with a yawn that Tommy quickly matches. "I'll sleep too, the others will keep watch."

"You'll wake me up if anything happens?" Tommy asks, hoping Sam doesn't hear how childish it sounds.

"Of course," Sam says, running a hand through his hair. "I'm not going anywhere."

In the bustle of the medical bay, far away from the bodies being dragged from the ship, the two humans, lost- but no longer alone, sleep.

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Well my winter semester is over and I finally have time to work on things other than school !

Thank you all for your patience, hope you enjoy what's to come.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Night falls over the market, and the species weaving in between the stalls shift to ones with larger eyes, darker skin and fur. Vendors trade places with their nocturnal counterparts. Tommy watches the switch from the window, silent, thinking.

He had woken up to the sunset, Sam still asleep, his crew drifting off. After managing to free himself from the couch, he tucked himself into a corner, against the cool glass of the window. He watches the crowds for an hour after that, until the rest of his crew, and most of Sam's, are asleep. Ranboo remains the only one awake, staring at the journal in his lap. The pages are blank, and the pen in his hand makes no effort to change that. Tommy turns his eyes away from his friend's struggle. He understands it.

He sighs. With the antibiotics in his system, he's starting to wane off of the worst of the sickness, but that only gives him more time to think, and he finds himself... sad. In a weird, gentle way. Not like before, when the grief felt like it was poised to rip him apart. He's sad in the way the end of a good book is sad. He knows he can come back, read it again, but it won't be the same. It won't *feel* the same. He sets his chin on his knees.

"Hey," Comes a voice from behind him. Tommy jumps, he hadn't heard the approach which means it can only be one person on the ship.

"Hey," Tommy says. They're quiet for a few seconds, Sam shifting his feet.

"Can I sit with you?" Sam asks, voice hushed in the quiet of the medbay. Tommy nods, eyes not leaving the window.

They watch the market together for a long time, the people bustling, laughing, fighting. They watch vendors haggle and children smile when they get what they want. They watch it even when it's too dark to see, watch people who have the opportunity to live where they don't. Tommy presses his forehead against the window and closes his eyes.

"You alright?" Sam asks, and Tommy can feel the way tears roll down his face. He nods. He is. That isn't a lie.

"I'm grieving," Tommy whispers, fingers tangling into the fabric of his pants.

"What for?" Sam asks, but Tommy knows that he knows. That he feels it too.

"Everything. My life, yours."

Tommy leans back from the window, keeping his fingers pressed against the window, watching the way the glass fogs around his fingertips.

"What- what can we do after this?" Tommy breathes. "What the fuck do we do now?"

"I- shoot, I don't know. Keep going?" Sam tries, screwing up his face.

"That's not what I mean," Tommy says, rolling his eyes. "You have to go, I do too."

Sam is quiet for a second, rubbing his index and thumb together in the way he does when he's thinking or nervous.

"I- you- we both have a place in this world, or- and I know- I know it's not *our* world, but... we can make it ours." Sam is crying, or at least about to be. Tommy can hear it in his voice. "I just- I wish our worlds had each other in it."

Tommy leans his face into Sam's shoulder, crying in earnest now.

Tommy watches the moon rise over the next several minutes as he waits for the tears to ebb, trying to compile his thoughts into something that Sam can understand, something legible.

"When we were... back there," Tommy says, still unable to name it, at least out loud. "I used to pretend- ah shit, this is embarrassing. I used to pretend that you had adopted me back on Earth, that you were like- the best dad. That everything was just... awesome."

"Yeah?" Sam asks, but he doesn't look weirded out or offended, he's smiling with no hint of mockery. "Tell me about that."

"In my... like dreams or whatever, you had a big house with a big yard and a big white dog named Fran, and every day was perfect and nothing ever hurt." Tommy clears his throat.

"And when... when you were taken, I felt like I lost a father, even though... you know. You're not really... that."

Sam leans against him, bonking the side of his head to Tommy's.

"I felt like I lost a son," Sam says, voice almost too low for Tommy to hear it.

They watch the moon rise in silence, and when it's at its peak, they see the market again. They see the bustling, they see the lives of the people on the planet, all lit up in silver. It's different, but it's still beautiful.

Tommy falls asleep against Sam's shoulder, listening to the faint murmur of the crowd. His dreams are full of things he never thought he'd miss. The way salt water stings his nose, how grass itches against his bare feet, falling out of trees. And if Sam sees a smile on his face while he sleeps it's not like he's gonna tell anyone.

In the morning Tommy sits on the edge of his bed while Sam rummages through the mess to find his bag of tools.

"I know I left it in here," He murmurs, shoving aside a pile of clothes.

"Do you *have* to go today?" Tommy asks, frowning. Sam stands up from where he was crouched in the clutter, a sympathetic frown on his face.

"Yeah, you saw- or, I guess you heard about what happened yesterday. We can't keep leaving the Badlands unmanned, even if it is pretty junky and less likely to be raided. It's just- it's not safe. It's extra not safe for people like us."

Tommy huffs in annoyance and reaches under his pillow, grabbing the toolbelt he had stashed there.

"Here," He grumbles, and Sam perks up at the sight.

"You sly dog," He says, though his smile fades when he takes in Tommy's expression. "Hey, it's gonna be okay."

"It doesn't feel that way," Tommy says, crossing his arms, squeezing his eyes shut. The mattress sinks down where Sam sits on it.

"Yeah," Sam agrees. "Yeah. It doesn't."

He takes the tool bag from Tommy's hand. Tommy doesn't try to pull it back.

The sun is high in the sky by the time Tommy stops stalling long enough for them to get to the bridge, though Sam seems equally reluctant to leave.

The two humans stand in the back of the group, hidden from any passersby that may notice them. Tommy is working really hard not to cry into Sam's shoulder, squeezing the older man as tightly as he can. Sam pats his back, making no effort to stifle his tears.

"It's not goodbye," Sam says, with so much conviction that Tommy almost believes him. "It's not like last time. We'll be able to talk and see each other all the time." Tommy nods, but he can't agree. He knows Sam doesn't really believe it either.

"What if something happens?" Tommy whispers. "What-"

"You'll be the first to know," Sam assures. "It's going to be okay."

Sam pulls out of the hug, and Tommy sees nothing but honesty in his eyes.

"We *will* see each other again," Sam says firmly.

"Earthlings have to stick together," Tommy says with a weak smile, holding his hand out. Sam grabs it and pulls him in for one last hug.

"Earthlings have to stick together," Sam agrees into Tommy's shoulder.

"Are you coming or what?" Ponk shouts from the door, waving an arm. Sam stares over Tommy's head, looking torn for a moment.

"Go on," Tommy says, nodding his head towards the exit. "You've got a whole life waiting for you out there." Sam smiles, eyes flicking to Tommy's own crew.

"You do too," He says, pulling away. He pulls his mask down over his face and steps out into the alien sun with one last wave to Tommy. The door slides shut behind him, and then Tubbo is at his side.

"Are you okay?" He asks tentatively. Tommy takes in a deep, shaky breath.

"Yeah," He says. "I think I am."

Chapter End Notes

WHIOOOO all that's left is an epilogue and we're wrapping up SHA, but not human error as a whole ;)

Epilouge

Chapter Summary

the last one, very short due to it just being an epilogue, but i hope you enjoy anyway

I also wanted to announce the implementation of scheduled updates. I am much busier than i used to be and wont be able to post as much, but from now on i am going to do my best to post a chapter every Saturday at nine pm, eatstern.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy runs, whipping around the corner and sliding in his socks, nearly slamming his face into the doorframe, but he doesn't slow down, his heart racing. He catches himself and rushes forward, throwing himself into Phil's captain chair, which spins rapidly at the force of Tommy slamming his entire body into it.

"Calm down mate," Phil says, trying to sound annoyed, but Tommy can hear a smile. Or whatever the elytrian equivalent of a smile is. "The computer's not going anywhere."

Said computer starts to ding, the expansive monitor displaying a message that he can't read, and Tommy slams his hand down on what he has figured out is the answer call button.

"Tommy!" Sam shouts on the other end, face filling the screen.

"Big man!" Tommy calls back with the same inflection. "Living large?"

"Always!" Sam replies with a broad smile. Phil walks away now that he's finished setting up the call, it's not like he could listen in on their conversations very well anyway. Tommy can't stop smiling. He still misses Sam like a phantom limb, but it hurts less knowing he's okay, that Tommy can call him up to talk to him. To tell him about some crazy thing that he saw out in space today.

More than that though, it is incredible to have someone who knows. For so long- as long as he'd been left on that burning husk of a ship, he's felt like he had no one who could possibly understand what had happened to him, but Sam had seen it all and worse and he's okay. He's different, yeah, but he's alive.

So maybe Tommy can end up okay too.

"What have you been getting up to then? Any cool space adventures?" Tommy asks, scuffing his sandals against the floor to spin himself in the chair.

"You could say..." Sam says, smiling coyly.

"What! You have to tell me!" Tommy says, slamming his feet down to bring his spinning to an abrupt stop. Sam throws his head back to laugh, and Tommy's eyes catch on the unnaturally sharp teeth he'd grown in his time away. His eyes slide back onto the way Sam's face scrunches up, the way his breath catches in his chest, and the *painfully* human sound of his laughter, and he doesn't feel afraid. Sam is as human as they come.

"Well," Sam starts, leaning back in his own chair, a patched-together thing that looked like it had been ripped out of a fighter jet, which, Tommy reasons, it probably was. "We got reports of a smuggling ship, so we got on-route. It was already harbored so that made our job a lot easier, we just parked nearby and snuck in, you'd think these guys would be incapable of stealth, but they're like, *stupidly* sneaky. Once we locked it from the inside it was a piece of cake to free everyone."

"Was there any... you know?"

"Humans? No, not even anything sentient, thankfully. They were just poachers. We called whatever the space equivalent of animal control is and they're gonna get everyone back to where they're meant to go."

"That's good," Tommy says, leaning back in his chair and only feeling the *tiniest* twinge of jealousy that they got to go back home.

"Actually..." Sam says, and there's that coy smile again that raises Tommy's suspicions. "There was *one* animal that wouldn't be able to go home."

"Aw, what?" Tommy groans. "That was almost a happy ending!"

A white mass overtakes the screen and Tommy yelps in surprise, pressing back into the chair. Sam's loud laughter is the only thing that reassures Tommy that he is not being attacked by some fluffy alien.

Sam manages to wrangle it, wrapping his arms around the furry body and pulling it off of his lap so that only its face is in frame.

Tommy presses a hand over his mouth.

It's a dog.

"Holy shit and fuck and every other curse word, you found a *dog*?" Tommy gasps.

"Isn't she pretty!" Sam coos, and Tommy knew he was a dog person but seriously, he's looking at the dog like it's his *child*.

"It is pretty cute," Tommy admits, because she is, and because Tommy had missed dogs a lot. "Does she have a name yet?"

"Yeah," Sam says, something soft in his eyes that Tommy can't quite place.

"It's Fran."

Chapter End Notes

DOG. DOG. DOG.

ALRIGHT that wraps up subterranean homesick alien, keep an eye out for the next work:
Sam's Interlude!

End Notes

yes the shady shopkeeper is quackity.

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